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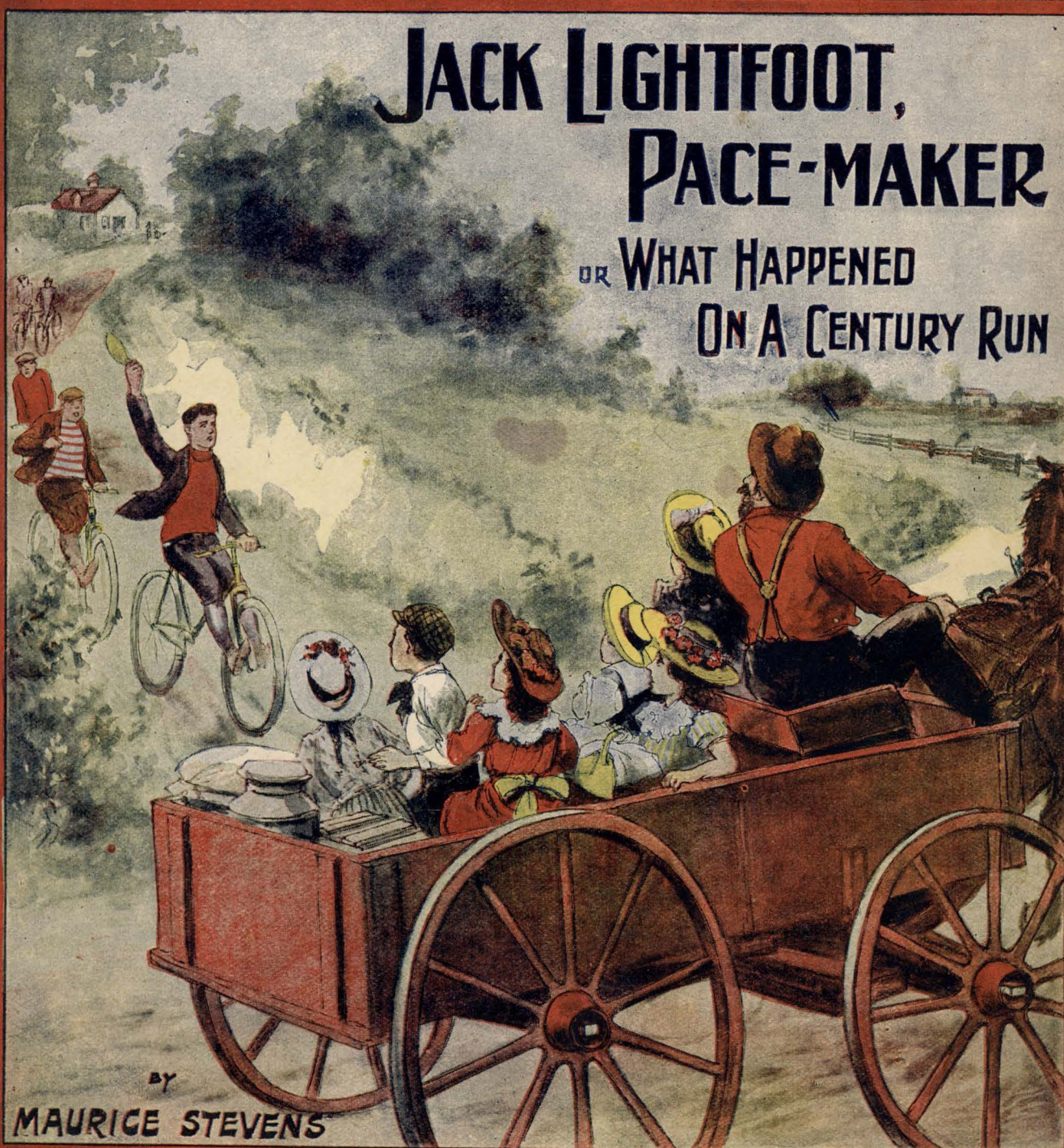


ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



JACK LIGHTFOOT, PACE-MAKER

OR WHAT HAPPENED
ON A CENTURY RUN



BY
MAURICE STEVENS

Just then, while they were rushing down the road with the speed of the Limited Mail,
Jack saw something ahead that chilled his blood.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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JACK LIGHTFOOT, PACEMAKER;

OR,

What Happened on a Century Run.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Jube Marlin, one of Jack's friends, who had the Yankee love for making money.

Mona Brighteyes, a girl who had the Indian gift of telling fortunes.

Ben Birkett, a boy with whom Jack had had trouble several times.

Farmer Mattock, at whose house our boys stop on their century run.

CHAPTER I.

JOKERS ALL.

"Say, do you want to hear something great?" asked Lafe Lampton, as he bounced into the gymnasium, one glorious spring morning.

"We do," Jube Marlin answered.

"If you want to hear something grate, rub two bricks together," chirped Ned Skeen.

"But I'm in earnest," declared Lampton, dropping into a chair.

"That so? I thought you were in the gym.!"

"What is this thing that is so great?" Nat Kimball asked.

"A bicycle trip."

Ned Skeen heard, with face alight, and, springing up, swung his cap.

"Oh, say, that will be great, fellows!"

"What kind of a bicycle trip?" Kimball asked.

"A regular century run, out through the country and back again. Jack's getting it up."

"And the weather's just right," said Jubal, looking from the window. "I allaow we couldn't have it finer than right naow. When's this goin' tew be?"

"Saturday, maybe; or, perhaps, we'll leave here Friday noon, and stop somewhere out in the country overnight."

"We won't go daown tew Tidewater ag'in, then?" said Jubal, in a tone of regret.

Lafe looked at him, with a merry twinkle in his sky-blue eyes.

"I should think, Jube, that you had enough of Tidewater, the last time you were there!"

Jube laughed.

"By hemlock, I did have some tough times, naow; but I had a lot of fun, besides! They've got street cars daown tew Tidewater."

He grinned, reminiscently.

"I saw you hanging onto me," said Skeen, "and I thought you would surely get killed."

"Say," said Jubal, while the grin on his homely, Yankee face expanded, "I got purty well acquainted with that there motorman. I went aout on the front platform and chinned right up tew him, askin' him all kinds of questions, abaout how the 'lectricity worked, an' if he wasn't afraid it would run up his leg when he put his foot on that dinged little bell he was hammerin' all the time with his toe, and things like that. When I got ready tew git off, I says tew him: 'Hope I'll see yeou ag'in!' And then he laughed, and says, says he: 'Oh, if yeou stay raound here I'll be sure tew run intew yeou, all right!' And I says tew him: 'Well, yeou won't, old feller, if I see the car comin'!'"

He chuckled loudly, as he recalled this.

All the boys were in a merry mood. The fine spring weather, the recent victory over the rival nine in the game played at Tidewater, and now this announcement that Jack Lightfoot was planning a century run on bicycles for the members of his high-school athletic club, caused their spirits to bubble over.

Jack came in while they were talking.

His step was springy, his gray-blue eyes bright, and

he looked the handsome, athletic youth that he was, intelligent, energetic and high-spirited.

He answered the questions that were fired at him; and dropped, smiling, into a chair.

He had forgiven Jube for his lapse from the proper course of conduct at Tidewater; and he had also forgiven Wilson Crane, who came now into the gym., close at Jack's heels.

"Jube is sorry we're not going in a direction that will take us through Tidewater," said Lafe, munching an apple; "he wants to ride on those trolley cars again."

"Well, I had a lot of fun on that trolley line," Jube insisted.

"That was before you got pinched!" said Skeen.

"By gravy, I wasn't pinched; I was jist kidnaped, along with that Tidewater pitcher. But I thought them Indians that held us would scalp us for sure, when they loaded up like they did on whisky. It makes my hair curl yit, tew think abaout it."

"Don't think about it," said Jack. "Think about the pretty girl that waited on you in the restaurant that first day, while I was eating at the next table."

"What abaout her?" Jube asked, flushing.

"Why, when she brought you your soup she had her thumb in it. You spoke to her about it, and she said: 'Why, the soup isn't hot! It don't burn me!'"

"Well, naow that yeou've told abaout that, tell abaout the boiled eggs!" Jube cried.

It was Jack's turn to flush.

"Yes, I'll tell that, too. You asked for a couple of boiled eggs. When they came you didn't like the looks of them, and you asked her if there was any lobster in the restaurant, and she turned and pointed to me. I'd made a little kick about something, and she wasn't pleased with it."

"Ha-ha—haw-haw!"

Jube was laughing at that recollection.

"But you was going to tell us about your ride on the trolley car," Lafe reminded.

"Well, by granny, one conductor there insulted me. I got intew a seat; when a drunk man comes staggerin' in and falls almost daown on me. That made me hot, and I says tew the conductor: 'Do yeou allaow drunk

men tew ride in this car?" And then he says: "If yeou'll jist set daown and keep still nobody will notice that yeou air drunk.'"

Jube laughed again.

"But I was a fool tew git in with Ben Birkett and that crowd," he admitted, speaking seriously. "I was havin' the time of my life, ridin' on them cars, flirtin' with the purty girls, and jist mixin' round, when them fellers come along and invited me tew go up into that haouse and have a game of cards. Wilson was with 'em, an' I went, and by doin' it I got intew a whole lot of trouble, and come blamed nigh missin' havin' any more fun."*

"Well, there's one thing, Jubal," said Jack, also speaking seriously. "If you and Wilson go with us on this century run you've got to carry yourselves straight, or after this we'll cut you out altogether and let you go it alone."

"But it's a temptation," said Jubal, "when fellers yeou know come tew yeou and ask yeou tew come with them for a jolly time. A feller hates to say no."

He laughed again.

"But, by granny, I got aout in time tew see the closin' of that ball game! And I wouldn't hev missed that for a whole dollar."

"Ned," said Lafe, "give us those verses about 'Casey at the Bat.'"

Ned Kimball's elocutionary efforts were never bad. He was a good deal of an actor, and he had a good voice for such things.

He hopped out into the floor.

"Well, I couldn't help saying those verses over to myself, that time, when Jack was striking Casey out. If they'd been written in the first place for Kid Casey, of the Tidewater Tigers, they couldn't have fitted him better. And I've made a change or two, to adapt them to that game."

Then, taking a position, as if he were a batter stand-

ing ready, facing a pitcher, he gave these lines from the famous verses called, "Casey at the Bat."

"There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
There was pride in Casey's bearing, and a smile on Casey's face,
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

"Then when our good Jack Lightfoot ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance glanced from Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip;
And so he stood, not striking, as the hot ball by him sped—
'That ain't my style,' said Casey. 'Strike one!' the umpire said.

"With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He smiled upon the bleachers, and he bade the game go on;
He signaled to Jack Lightfoot, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, 'Strike two!'

"The sneer is gone from Casey's lips, his teeth are clinched in
hate,
He pounds with cruel vengeance his bat upon the plate;
And now Jack Lightfoot holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

"Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are
light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children
shout;
But there's no joy in Tidewater—for Casey was struck out!"

The spirit with which Nat Kimball delivered this was altogether so good that even Jack Lightfoot applauded as loudly as the others.

"By granny, I'm glad I got away from them Indians in time tew see that!" said Jubal. "I wouldn't hev missed it for anything."

"And yet they're not satisfied," said Jack, laughing. "They say we must play them again sometime, because Casey was in no condition to pitch or bat after he'd been held a prisoner so long by the fellows who kidnaped him."

"I think I'd like to have a chance to do 'em up once more," declared Lafe, lazily, as he chewed at his bite of apple. "That was hot stuff, that game, and as queer a one as was ever played. If they say the word, we'll crawl 'em again."

"Yeou rec'lect when Jack made that great hit and home run," said Jubal, "and the fielder was breakin' his neck tryin' tew git the ball? A man standin' by me says: 'What makes that fielder run so?' And I says to him: 'That's jist because he can't fly.'"

"I heard one good joke on you, Jube, anyway," said Ned Skeen.

"I bet yeou didn't! What was it?"

*For the story of the ball game at Tidewater, and the interesting adventures which befell Jubal and the other members of Jack Lightfoot's nine, see last week's issue of this library, No. 11, "Jack Lightfoot's Home Run; or, A Glorious Hit in the Right Place."

"It was when you ran up to the man that was driving the street sprinkler—just as if you'd never seen one before—and told him the water was leaking out."

"But I want to hear about that bicycle run," said Nat Kimball.

"Well, we'll start Friday right after dinner," Jack answered. "There's to be no school Friday afternoon. We'll take the road that leads west. At night we'll stop somewhere. Then, in the morning, we'll go on to the town of Lansing, perhaps, or else up over the hills toward the south, and swing round homeward in that direction. A part of the way will be through the woods, and along Laurel River; and the roads up in there are said to be good, since the weather has settled. So, get your wheels in shape, and we'll have the spin of our lives."

"I know an old lady up that way who always has some fine buttermilk and mighty good butter," said Lafe Lampton, who generally could think of more desirable things to eat and drink than anyone else.

"And I know an Irishman up there who has a goat," said Skeen.

"A goat?"

"Yes; you'll like that goat."

"Why?" said lazy Lafe, leaning heavily against the wall.

"It's a mighty good butter!"

Lafe forgot his laziness long enough to lunge at the joker; but Skeen, leaping up with a motion that tipped over his chair, got out of the way.

"We don't need to go on a bike trip to have fun," said Jack; "we can have it here in great quantities."

Jubal sat grinning, trying to think up another joke.

"Say," he said, "speakin' of Lansing, yeou've heerd of that scrub nine they've got up there?"

"I'm sure I never heard of it," said Kimball, falling into the trap.

"Well, they call it a scrub nine; and I'll bet a punkin yeou can't guess why."

"Well, why? Any particular reason?"

"They call it a scrub nine because it's made up of servant girls."

Then Kimball wanted to hit Jubal.

Nearly always when the boys met in the gym. there

was a lot of chaffing and joking; yet they never forgot what the gym. was for—to enable them to harden their muscles, add to their strength, and put themselves in condition, not only for fighting battles on the diamond, but later for fighting the sterner battles of life.

But the joking came to an end.

Jack, looking at his watch, saw that they would barely have time to get to school, if they did not want to be tardy; and the club of light-hearted jokers adjourned in comical haste.

CHAPTER II.

THE START.

Ding-ing-ing-ing-ing!

"Hurrah! Hooray-ay! Rah! rah! rah!"

The bicycle boys were under way, pedaling along the street that led to the road by Laurel River.

Their shouts and cheers brought many people to the doorways, and these waved hats and handkerchiefs, cheering also to see the bright, young faces and trim forms that swept by.

A hen ran cackling across the street, and the boys yelled at that.

A dog came bow-wow-ing, and rushed past the line of boys as if to attack Jack Lightfoot, who was in front, leading the procession.

Jack thrust out his right hand, which held a little ammonia gun, a sort of syringe loaded for just this purpose. The strong ammonia shot out and struck the dog in the nose, so that it tumbled backward with a howl, and fled with its tail between its legs.

Then the boys yelled again, laughing, as they bent over their handle bars.

Eight or ten boys trailed at Jack's heels, all dressed in cycling costume, all talking, laughing and cheering.

Tom Lightfoot, who rode third or fourth in the line, began to sing:

"On a bike,
Down the pike;
We will ride,
We will glide!"

His front wheel struck a stick, and he bounced into the air.

Ned Skeen yelled, making up words and tune:

"And if we hit a stick,
Or bump against a brick,
We will ride upon our nose,
And tear our little clothes!"

Jack was pacemaker, and he hit it up for the rest of the boys needed what wind they had for the serious had the smooth valley road before them.

Then the singing and the shouting stopped, for the boys needed what wind they had for the serious work of pumping themselves along.

The day was beautiful, with a blue sky—a perfect spring day; just the sort to make a fellow feel that it is a joy to be alive and out in the open air.

The trees were green now, and flowers sprang into view from the roadside as the bicyclists sped on.

The wind that came off the lake was cool and refreshing, and the lake itself, which they were leaving off on their right, dimpled and smiled back at the blue sky.

Here and there the sail of a small boat brightened it, flashing like the wing of a gull; and further back, behind Tiger Point, the smudgy smoke of the little lake steamer could be seen, like a torn black ribbon lying on the sky line.

Now and then a bird fluttered up out of the road; or a squirrel ran along the fence and climbed into a tree, from which he peeped curiously down at the swaying line of boys, and barked nervously at them as they flashed on and were gone.

Five miles out, on the high road that led to Lansing, they came to the first group of houses dignified by the name of a town.

This was Dodson's Crossing, a small country place, with a store and a post office and a dozen or so residences.

There was a good well of water at Dodson's, in front of the store.

As the boys swung round the curve of the road and came in sight of the houses, they were surprised to see a large group of people awaiting them.

These people yelled and cheered when they saw the bicyclists.

Jack slowed up and swung down from his wheel, and the other boys as they arrived did the same.

Then the people began to crowd around, asking some singular questions, and inspecting the wheels.

"I'd like to see the trick," said Dodson, as the boys were quenching their thirst. "I'm purty busy, though, and ain't got much time to wait. Which one of you is it that's goin' to ride round the square here, standing in the bike seat on his head?"

"By hemlock, what's that feller talkin' abaout?" said Jubal, speaking to Lafe Lampton.

"Why, these wheels ain't all of the same make!" cried a man who had been inspecting the bicycles."

"Who said they were?" Wilson Crane asked. "Of course they're not all of the same make."

"That's what we heerd. Didn't you send word out in advance?"

Some small boys were talking, and they pointed to Jack Lightfoot.

"I'll bet he's the one's goin' to do that—turn a summerset off'n his wheel while it's goin', and then light back in the seat without lettin' the bike fall to the ground!"

Jack could not fail to take note of the comments that were buzzing all about him.

"I don't think I understand you," he said, speaking to Dodson.

"Why, the feller that came out from Cranford yisterday—the feller you sent out—said——"

"We didn't send anyone out!"

"No? There's a mistake somewhere, then."

Some of the bicycle boys gathered about Jack, to hear Dodson's statement.

"A feller came along here yisterday on a horse, and he stopped here at the store and gave out word that a lot of the high-school boys of Cranford was comin' out to exhibit a new make of bicycle, and to show how expert they'd become in bike riding. He said you fellers would give an exhibition in the square here in front of the store, and he told what you'd do—stand on your heads while ridin' round, turn summersets, carry each other on your shoulders, and a lot of things like that."

Jack was astounded.

"So I sent out word yisterday," said Dodson, "and

the people's been coming in all mornin', waiting to git to see the free show."

Jack flushed. This was the work of a practical joker, he knew. Somebody in Cranford wanted to have fun at the expense of the bicycle boys on this trip.

"It's a mistake," said Jack. "Somebody's fooled you. We didn't send out any such word as that."

"We didn't send out any word!" said Skeen.

Dodson grew red in the face. He was a fat, little man, with a great sense of his own importance, and he began to see that some one had been making a fool of him.

"Nothin' in it?" he asked.

"Not a thing," said Jack. "This is the first we've heard of it."

"It was one of your own boys who brought the word," said Dodson, indignantly, while some of the farmers snickered, even though they, too, had been deceived.

"None of our boys did that," Jack declared.

"Well, he was a Cranford boy, for I've seen him in the town," Dodson persisted. "He said you sent him out; that you was to git a per cent. on any bicycles that might be sold round here as a result of this advertisement of the wheels; and he told me to have as many people come in as I could, for the show you fellers would give would be worth seein'."

"I'm sorry," said Jack. "What sort of looking fellow was he?"

Dodson described him as well as he could, and also his horse; but Jack could not tell who the boy was from that description.

At the next little town, four or five miles further on, Jack and his companions met another crowd lined up in front of the store and post office; and this crowd yelled, and laughed delightedly, as the bicycle boys put in an appearance.

Then the same questions and comments were heard; the people jostling against each other to see the new make of wheel, and discovering, by and by, that they had been sold.

This crowd did not take it so good-naturedly as the crowd at Dodson's. They were inclined to charge

Jack and his friends with having perpetrated the joke themselves, that they might have a laugh on the gullible farmers; and Jack could hardly get them to believe him, when he declared that he and his friends had no hand in it.

There were many little towns strung along the highway here; and at each the boys were met by the same experience; until at last they became actually nervous, whenever they approached one of the towns, knowing what they would meet.

Over and over among themselves, as they rode along, they questioned as to who the boy could have been.

Phil Kirtland was somewhat given to horseback riding, and he might have played a trick like that; but Tom Lightfoot declared that Phil could not have done it. He had seen him at the academy, and talked with him, at the time this mysterious horseman was doing his work.

So Phil Kirtland was eliminated.

They thought of other boys, but found it impossible to fix on anyone.

Now and then, as Jack and his friends pedaled along, they passed farmers who had walked out to the road from the fields, and who stared at them, or swung their hats, as the bicyclists flew by.

Women, too, came to the doors of their lonely houses, with their children, and looked at the bicyclists, showing by their manner that they had been expecting them, and had heard of the performances the boys were announced to give in each town they passed through.

Jack and his friends were undeniably mystified. They put the whole thing down as the work of some practical joker, who wanted to have a little fun at their expense. But who was this joker?

"When we do find out who he is we'll hammer his head in!" declared Skeen, who was getting tired, he said, of being stared at as if he were a giraffe, or some new kind of frog, as he went spinning along.

"A little fun is all right," he added, "but this is rather rubbing it in."

But Jack Lightfoot was taking the whole thing good-naturedly.

"The fun of a trip of this kind comes largely," he said, "from the many unexpected things that happen."

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FOE IN A NEW PLACE.

"Whoop! Hee-ow! Yee-ow!"

"Hooray, there it goes!"

"And there come the hounds! Hoop-la! We'll get in ahead of them!"

Thus the boys yelled.

Another of the unexpected things of a bicycle trip had happened.

For some minutes, as they pedaled through the hills which lay away from the river, they had heard the booming notes of hounds. The sounds had risen and then died away, had seemed to come near, and then draw off into the distance; when suddenly they broke forth in a wild clamor, close at hand.

Then into the road ahead of the boys leaped a gray fox.

It stopped an instant, crouching, after making the leap, and swung its head around.

Seeing the boys, it turned down the road, which was here a long slope, with not much descent, and almost straight away.

Down this road the fox trotted, breaking into a lope that carried it swiftly along.

The booming of the hounds now broke like a volley through the hills.

The bicycle boys yelled, pedaling after the fox.

"Hit it up!" cried Jack.

He swung his cap and shouted loudly, to make the fox run faster, as it loped on, keeping to the road. He spun his feet around, going at a swift clip.

After him came the other bicyclists, each pedaling as if for life, yelling and swinging caps.

They made more noise for a time than the hounds.

It would have been an easy thing for the fox to have left the road. On each side grew thick woodlands, with much underbrush; and these woods rolled away unevenly through the hills. The road lay like a ribbon through the woods.

Seeing that the fox was staying in the road, Jack

wondered if the clever animal was not doing this in the hope that the passage of the queer riders would trouble the hounds. He had read so many strange stories of the cleverness of foxes that the thing did not seem to him unlikely.

He soon began to crowd the fox, for on his bike he could speed faster than the fleeing animal.

The hounds had tumbled out of the undergrowth, yelping, and were coming along the road after the bicyclists, yet a good distance behind.

Seeing that he was crowding the fox, Jack slackened his pace. He did not wish to drive the animal out of the road, if it preferred to remain there, and he wanted to watch it as long as he could.

Discovering that the bicyclists were not drawing any nearer, the little, gray beast remained in the road, running low. While seeming not to be exerting itself unduly, it was getting over the ground at a rattling gait.

The boys were still yelling and swinging their caps. They knew they were having the time of their lives. Not in a dozen bicycle trips was such a thing likely to happen again.

Off through the woods, on the side from which fox and dogs had appeared, they heard now the voices of horsemen, a thundering of hoofs, and a cracking of boughs as the horsemen tried to gain the highroad where the hounds were bellowing.

With that slackening of pace on Jack's part, which lessened the speed of the whole line, the dogs gained on the bicyclists, and soon the foremost hounds were racing right behind the boys.

They were swift creatures, running with their heads close to the ground, lifting their noses now and then, as the scent of the fox came strongly, and then giving tongue. They did not seem to notice the fox, which was in plain sight, but appeared to run entirely by scent.

At the bottom of the long incline the road made a sharp curve.

Here the fox left the road, leaping a fence and disappearing from sight in the underbrush.

Jack stopped his swift pace and drew to the side of the road, in which he was imitated by the other

boys, and pedaled slowly until the hounds had run by, seeing them leap the fence and vanish into the woods.

Behind the hounds came the horsemen, young fellows, dressed in hunting costume. One of them had a horn, which he now and then put to his lips, sending a musical note through the hills.

Jack slipped from his wheel and stood close by the fence, as the horsemen came plunging down the road.

The foremost drew rein when he reached the bicycle boys.

"Which way did the fox go?" he shouted, for he had not seen it.

Jack pointed to the fence.

The horse took the fence at a bound, and was followed by the others, and all rode away, tearing with a cracking sound through the woods.

Jack was about to mount and ride on again, when he heard other hoofs in the road behind him.

Then he heard Ned Skeen yell:

"Look there!"

This last horseman, who apparently had fallen behind, had not ventured to come down the road after the others; but now leaped his horse over the fence some distance up the hill, disappearing almost as soon as Jack caught sight of him.

"Did you see him?" Skeen asked.

"Yes," said Jack; "that fellow was Ben Birkett!"

It was a great surprise to know that Ben Birkett was there.

Birkett had been an academy student, coming to Cranford from a town some distance away, and entering Prof. Sanderson's rather swell establishment, where he had assumed many airs, proclaimed the wealth of his parents, and had ended by being found guilty of a crime which he had tried to charge on Jack Lightfoot.

For that he had been compelled to leave the academy and Cranford, to escape arrest and punishment.

But he had gone away Jack's bitter enemy, threatening to be revenged on him if ever the opportunity came.

In addition to this, only the previous week, while Jack Lightfoot's nine was at Tidewater for the purpose of playing the Tidewater baseball nine, Ben Bir-

kett had appeared there, when he was not known to be in the country.

Both Jubal Marlin and Wilson Crane flushed a guilty red now, as they discovered that the horseman who had taken the fence above the bend of the road was none other than the young fellow with whom they had been foolish enough to play cards at Tidewater and thereby get themselves into trouble.

"By hemlock, it gits me haow he happens to be here, though!" Jubal admitted.

"Those other fellows were from Lansing," said Tom. "I recognized two of them, though I don't know their names. I know they're from Lansing, for I've seen them there."

Birkett was out of sight, and the bellowing of the hounds was drawing further away.

Jack swung into position on his bicycle.

"I think I know now who notified the people that we were to be along this route to-day. It was Ben Birkett."

"Why would he do that?" Wilson Crane asked, staring in the direction taken by Birkett, and thrusting out his long nose as if he fancied the very air might bring him the answer.

"That's my guess, anyway," said Jack. "I suppose he thought it would annoy us, or make trouble for us in some way. And I'm betting dollars to doughnuts that he'll try to make more trouble for us before this trip is ended!"

"But how could he know we were going to make this run to-day?" Wilson persisted.

"He has acquaintances in Cranford. If he's staying in Lansing now it would have been easy enough for him to have heard about it in a letter from one of those acquaintances. That's my guess."

Jubal was silent, as he pedaled along, following close behind Tom Lightfoot. This sudden reappearance of Ben Birkett was not calculated to make him feel easy. He knew that both he and Wilson had disgraced themselves in the eyes of Jack Lightfoot and the other boys of the club by what they did at Tidewater. He hoped the thing had been forgotten. And now, apparently, that sore memory was to be freshened again.

"By hemlock," he grumbled to himself, "if I'd knowed that critter was goin' tew be aout here I'd stayed to home! I hope, anyhaow, I won't run into them Indians ag'in."

CHAPTER IV.

TEMPTED.

Ben Birkett lay on the ground in a thick covert of woods near the roadside.

He was tired, and his horse was blown. He had become separated from the other fox hunters, and did not know where they were, but had ridden toward the place where they were to put up for the night.

So far as he knew the fox had escaped. He had not heard the hounds for some time. They had lost the trail in a small stream, and then their wild notes had ceased; and he, separated from the other riders, could not after that tell where either hounds or horsemen were.

The sun was descending rapidly in the west.

Jack Lightfoot's party had started from Cranford about one o'clock.

After making that sharp turn at the foot of the hill, the road which Jack and his friends were following had looped back on itself for a long distance, to get around some impassable ledges. That had taken Jack's party straight away from the fox hunters for a time, but brought them again toward them when the road once more changed its course.

Ben Birkett was thinking of Jack and his friends, as he lay there under the trees by the roadside, and his thoughts were not pleasant.

Though Birkett was fairly well educated, and was a good-looking young fellow, his mind had given itself up to hate of the most bitter kind against anyone who he fancied had wronged him.

But for Jack Lightfoot, he assured himself, he would still be in Cranford, a student at Sanderson's swell academy.

He did not take into consideration the obvious fact that he was himself to blame for all that had occurred. He had planned to lay a crime on Jack Lightfoot; but Jack had been clever enough to show him up as the guilty party himself.

Birkett's father was a man of considerable means; but he was stern and hard, and when he knew why his son had been compelled to leave Cranford he became even harder and sterner.

As a result, Birkett had by and by left home. For a time he had been stopping with some friends in Lansing; but he knew that could not last.

At Tidewater he had gained a little money by laying wagers on the ball game. What he would do next he did not know. But he did realize that he was becoming desperate. Another thing, which he did not yet know, was that he was descending the moral toboggan slide that has wrecked so many young men and boys.

Thinking these bitter things against Jack Lightfoot, Ben Birkett was aroused by the sight of the bicyclists, as they flashed into view on the top of a distant rise in the roadway.

He had not expected to see them there, for he was not very familiar with the country. He did not know the road made that big loop.

Hate leaped hot in his heart, as he saw Jack Lightfoot in the lead as pacemaker, sending his wheel along in an easy, yet beautiful way, and the other boys strung out behind him.

He knew they must pass within a short distance of where he lay.

At this juncture the hounds gave tongue again, over in the woods beyond him, with the suddenness of a fire alarm. They had once more picked up the trail of the fox. Following this, he heard the crack of a rifle.

Some of the fox hunters, he among them, were armed that day with small rifles; they had expected they might wish to shoot at the fox, if the chance came.

When he heard the hounds give tongue, and heard the crack of the rifle, Ben Birkett started to his feet.

Looking at the hill down which the bicycle boys were coasting, he saw that their heads were turned in the direction of the noise.

As he thus stared at them, a thought came to him which made his face pale and his knees shake. His hand closed tightly on the little rifle which he carried.

He had borne it by a strap that went over his shoulders, but it was in his hand now.

Pitching it to his shoulder, he pointed it at a tree which grew on the other side of the road.

Again the rifle behind him cracked, echoing through the woods.

"I could claim it was an accident!" he said. "Nobody could prove that it wasn't!"

His hands trembled as he let the muzzle of the rifle fall. He was still shaking. Behind him, but some distance away, the hounds were making a great outcry.

Never before in his life had Ben Birkett harbored the thought of turning a murderous weapon on any human being; but the idea was in his mind now. That alone showed how he had gone downhill since leaving Cranford.

"Why, I'm shaking like a leaf!" he muttered, holding up his quivering hand. Of course, I wouldn't do it!"

Then he reached back to his hip pocket, took out a flask of liquor, and tipped it to his mouth.

He felt better when he had swallowed the whisky. His hands did not seem to shake so much, and his body did not feel that cold, chilly sensation which had come to it so suddenly. The warming whisky had driven that away almost as soon as it was downed.

"I think I'll get back where they can't see me," he said.

He took his horse by the bridle and led the animal back into the woods, behind a spur of hill.

He was sure now that he had no intention of trying a shot with that rifle at Jack Lightfoot; yet he could not resist the temptation to steal back toward the road for the purpose of taking a look at the bicycle boys as they whirled past.

He did not know whether or not they had seen him when he crossed the road as he followed the hounds earlier in the afternoon. He hoped, at least, that if they saw him they did not recognize him.

He had heard that they were to make this trip from one of the Lansing fellows who was riding behind the hounds that day.

And it was true that he had spread that report along

the road, which had drawn the farmers out to see the wonderful performances of the athletic young bicyclists.

Mischief and a hope that the thing would be very annoying to Jack had induced him to do that. It was a great joke, he thought; yet he had not spoken of it to any of those young fellows from Lansing.

Again, as he came in sight of the road, he caught a glimpse of the bicyclists, topping a rise in the road. They were very much nearer, and would whirl along the road in front of him pretty soon.

Again he threw up the rifle, and this time sighted it at a rock on the other side of the roadway. The whisky had steadied his nerves.

"I believe I could knock him off that bicycle as easy as anything!" was his thought. "And—nobody would ever know that I did it!"

Again behind him he had heard the report of a rifle.

"Those fellows are cracking away at the fox, and nobody could say that it wasn't just a bullet which went wild that did the work!"

He drew the rifle down. His face was pale and his eyes bright. Never in his life had he felt such hate of Jack Lightfoot, not even when he had been forced to leave Cranford in disgrace. That whole miserable business rose before him again. He caught his breath and his brain grew hot, as he thought of it.

Jack Lightfoot flashed into view again, leading the bicyclists. He rode in a beautiful, easy manner, yet was sending his wheel on at a good pace. Some of the boys following him thought the pace was too good.

Jack had not a suspicion of danger. Exercise of this kind, in the open air, out in the beautiful spring weather, was a tonic to him. His eyes were bright and his heart was light.

Over on the hillside, hidden by the trees, Ben Birkett knelt, his face working with hate, as he looked out on that line of speeding boys. He gripped his rifle nervously.

As Jack flashed into view again, the pacemaker of the bicycle boys, with his body bent over the handle bars as he sent his wheel spinning on, the face of Ben Birkett darkened.

He put the rifle again to his shoulder. He had

cocked it, and his nervous finger trembled over the trigger.

"I could give him a good scare, anyway," he whispered. "I'd like to shoot his head off; but I could give him a good scare!"

He had not fully made up his mind to take a shot at the flying form of Jack Lightfoot; but he was half wishing that he dared to, and was wholly tempted to shoot near him, for the purpose of scaring him. His nervous finger was fluttering over the trigger, as that temptation tugged at his heart.

Then that rifle cracked in the woods behind him, giving him a nervous start. His fluttering finger touched the trigger almost involuntarily, and his own gun flamed.

With a thrill of fear he saw Jack Lightfoot pitch forward from his wheel into the dust of the road; and, seeing that, he leaped up and fled away through the underbrush in the direction of his horse.

CHAPTER V.

TOM LIGHTFOOT AS AN AVENGER.

"Oh! I've killed him, and I didn't really mean to!" was Ben Birkett's thought, as he thus turned and fled, with his heart choking in his throat and the leaping blood singing in his ears.

He slipped and fell heavily, as he thus turned and ran, and lost time in his flight.

But he was up and away again, clinging to his rifle. He thought he heard a wild tumult in the road, and in imagination beheld Jack's friends gathered round his lifeless body and making a clamor.

So panic stricken was Ben Birkett, now that the shot had been fired, that he fell again, as he neared the top of the hill.

Then he found that some high rocks interposed; and with a feeling that pursuers were hot on his trail, he turned and ran wildly down the hill, to get round this rocky obstruction.

After thus circling round, he sighted his horse, and hastened toward it.

He had tied it to a swinging tree bough. He tried to slip the knot. Failing, in his haste, he took out his knife and severed the strap.

He led the horse out from under the tree, and was about to climb up into the saddle, when he heard footsteps on the slope behind him, and turning with a cry of fear beheld Tom Lightfoot.

Tom saw him at the same instant, and came leaping toward him.

Tom was weaponless, and Birkett was armed with the rifle.

Birkett picked up the rifle as if to shoot Tom Lightfoot; then thought better of it, and again tried to mount his horse.

He was trembling so much, however, that before he could put his feet in the stirrups and set the horse in motion Tom was upon him.

With a jump like that of a greyhound, Tom sprang, and catching Birkett by the shoulder dragged him over, so that he hung half out of the saddle.

The horse gave a frightened leap, and Birkett fell heavily to the ground. The rifle dropped from his hand with a clatter.

With another jerk Tom threw him sprawling on his face.

"You hound!" Tom screamed, beside himself with rage.

He lifted his foot as if to kick Birkett in the side.

Birkett scrambled out of his reach, while Tom stood looking at him, with blazing face.

"You whelp!" Tom screamed at him, and moved upon him with clinched fist. "Stand up like a man, while I knock you down!"

Birkett tried to get hold of his rifle. His horse was trotting off in the midst of the trees.

"What—what do you mean?" he stammered, terrified.

"What did *you* mean by shooting Jack?"

"I—I didn't!" Birkett stammered, his face white, while he trembled.

"The report came from this hill, and there's your gun!"

He again advanced on Birkett, who retreated before him.

"You shot Jack, and perhaps you've killed him!" said Tom, still following him, while his gray-blue eyes burned with an awful light.

"It—it—was an accident!" said Birkett, still retreating.

"It was no accident! You shot to kill, you scoundrel!"

Then Tom's rage and grief got the better of him. He sprang at Birkett, and with one blow of his fist knocked him against the tree toward which he had been retreating.

As Birkett half fell his hand clutched a club. The blow in the face, the terrible fear that was on him, added to the effect of the whisky he had swallowed, transformed him temporarily into a maniac. He rushed at Tom, striking with the club.

"I'll kill you, too!" he howled, as he struck with that bludgeon.

Tom rushed to meet him. He knocked the blow of the club aside, so that it struck on his shoulder instead of on his head, though its force was enough to bring him halfway to his knees.

Seeing his advantage, Birkett dashed at him, striking again.

Tom writhed out of the way, and the club hit the ground, breaking in Birkett's hands.

Dropping the club, Birkett now tried to get Tom Lightfoot by the throat.

"I'll kill you, too!" he screamed, while his lips foamed and his eyes had the glare of a lunatic.

It was easier said than done.

Tom Lightfoot dodged and ducked; then he smashed his fist into Birkett's face.

As Birkett tumbled backward, Tom sprang on him again, with the bound of a panther.

He bore Birkett backward to the ground, and clutching him by the throat seemed to jam his head into the earth. A cry of fear gurgled from Birkett's throat. He saw the glaring eyes of Tom Lightfoot above him. He believed that he was himself a murderer, and now it seemed that he was about to pay the penalty with his own life.

As Tom thus bore Birkett backward, shaken with rage, for Tom believed that Birkett had shot Jack Lightfoot, there was a patter of feet on the hillside, and Ned Skeen was heard crying, joyfully:

"He's all right! He's all right!"

Tom's fingers relaxed their hold. It was time, for Birkett's eyes were fairly popping out of his head.

Tom withdrew his hands, shaken by a revulsion of feeling. His rage, he saw, had carried him beyond bounds.

He stood up quivering like a leaf, while Birkett lay on the ground clawing at his bruised throat and breathing heavily.

"Get up!" said Tom, his voice bitter with scorn.

Birkett scrambled heavily to his feet. His face was red, and he wheezed when he tried to speak.

"The bullet didn't hit him," Skeen announced. "He's all right!"

Birkett saw that Tom had turned to Ned Skeen.

It was an opportunity not to be lost.

For all he knew, Tom Lightfoot might attack him again; and, at any rate, it was likely that Tom would want to hold him for firing that shot.

He saw his rifle lying on the ground, but it was beyond reach, and he could not stop to get it.

So, with one wild bound, he sprang down the slope, and in another moment was running like a deer in the direction taken by his horse.

Tom was hardly surprised by Birkett's sudden flight. He looked after him, still with that scorn burning in his eyes.

"Let him go!" he said, hoarsely, his hands clinching.

He turned again to Skeen, saying eagerly.

"The bullet didn't strike Jack?"

"No; it struck the handle bar, and knocked the bicycle over. He was stunned for a minute, and we thought he'd been shot. But—he's all right now. That was Birkett!"

"Yes," said Tom, looking again in the direction taken by Birkett. "It isn't his fault that Jack isn't dead. He tried hard enough to shoot him."

"Then—then it wasn't an accident?"

"Not a bit of it! He tried to shoot him. And"—he drew a deep breath—"well, it's a good thing you came when you did. I might have killed the scoundrel. I lost my head."

He was still trembling violently, and now tears came into his eyes. He felt so weak all at once that

he put his hand on Skeen's shoulder, finding the need of support.

"I—I was afraid Jack was dead!"

"But he's all right," Skeen declared again. "Not even hurt; though the fall shook him up a bit."

Ned Skeen felt like crying himself; but he winked back the tears, and put up his hand in an awkward attempt to comfort Tom.

"Do you want to try to capture Birkett?"

"No, let him go!"

Tom straightened up and dashed the tears away.

"When I heard the gun, and saw that Jack had tumbled, I didn't stop for anything. I just wanted to set my fingers on the throat of the scamp who fired the shot. I felt sure it wasn't an accident. When I got up here Birkett was on his horse, and would have ridden away in another minute."

"He left his gun," said Skeen.

"Yes; he didn't have time to get it. That's what he did the shooting with. I thought he was going to take a shot at me when he first saw me."

He moved over now and picked up the gun.

Some more boys appeared over the hill, among them Jubal Marlin and Wilson Crane.

"Jack's all right!" they shouted. "Who did the shooting?"

Tom looked once more at the woods into which Ben Birkett had disappeared.

"It was that scoundrel, Ben Birkett!" he declared.

"And here's his gun!" Ned Skeen announced. "He was right here, when Tom tackled him; and he tried to shoot Tom, too."

"He got away?" said Wilson, thrusting his head in the direction of the woods.

"Tom let him go."

"By hemlock, I'd have held him," said Jubal. "Why, that come blamed nigh bein' murder! I'd 'a' held him."

Tom felt weak and shaky. Carrying the gun, he walked on over the hill toward the road, while Ned Skeen pointed out to the boys where Birkett had been lying, and explained the situation as he saw it when he came upon the scene.

Other boys came hurrying over the hill, asking ques-

tions of Tom, which he did not fully answer, and they passed on to where Skeen was delivering his explanations.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE BOYS PAID FOR A NIGHT'S LODGING.

The noise that came from the vicinity of Eph Mattock's barnyard and orchard, as the bicycle boys wheeled into the lane, sounded like nothing imaginable so much as a parade of small boys blowing horns and thumping tin cans.

It was a very pandemonium of din.

What it was all about Jack Lightfoot and his friends could not guess at first.

Jack felt as good as new, he assured his friends. The fall from the bicycle had stunned him and shaken him up pretty heavily, but he was made of tough fiber, and it would take more than even a heavy fall from his wheel to knock him out.

The shoulder on which he had landed as he fell still pained him a bit at times, but this he disregarded.

No attempt had been made by the boys to follow Ben Birkett. If that young scamp would clear out of the country and leave them unmolested they were willing that he should do so.

At the same time, it would not have been safe for Birkett to have come upon that group of boys now; he must have received a punishment that he would not have forgotten in many a long day. But he had cleared out, apparently, and they were willing to let him go, inasmuch as what they believed had been his attempt on Jack's life had not resulted in anything serious.

Tom Lightfoot had the rifle swung over his shoulder by its strap, and meant to keep it, to use as proof against Birkett, in case the other was arrested later. An examination had disclosed one empty cartridge shell, and that had been left in the gun, also for proof against Birkett. And the scratched handle bar where the bullet had struck was there, also, to tell its tale, if the telling were needed.

So Jack and his friends had ridden on; and when sunset drew near they had turned into Mattock's, where Lafe Lampton said good milk, buttermilk, and

butter were to be had, together with fresh eggs and other farm products.

It was like Lafe, to keep tab on all the best eating places within or about Cranford. He had been at Mattock's once, and he still remembered the good things that Mrs. Mattock set on the supper table the evening he was there. He seemed to smell those tasty edibles, as he followed Jack Lightfoot into the lane.

But what the horrible din was about not even Lafe could guess. Cow bells, tin pans, and things of that kind, were being rattled and hammered, and the notes of a dinner horn also rose, all making a continuous racket.

"Oh, I know what it is now!" said Jack, as he caught sight of several figures close by the lane fence, these figures being engaged in making that loud noise, while the old farmer was throwing water into the air with a dipper, taking the water from a pail which one of his boys had brought from the well.

"Well, I don't!" Lafe admitted.

"A swarm of bees has left the hive, and they're trying to make them settle."

"Well, is that the way they go about it?" Skeen howled.

"By granny, I should think all that noise would scare 'em clean out of the country," Jubal asserted.

Jack pedaled on until he came near the group by the fence, and then swung nimbly to the ground.

The other boys rode up and did the same.

Farmer Mattock and his whole family were out there. The old man, with his hat and coat off, was throwing water into the air, and while he did that Mrs. Mattock, and the boys and girls, were hammering lustily on whatever they could get hold of that would make a noise, and clanging an old cowbell. The uproar was terrific.

"You see," said Jack, "when a new swarm of bees hatch in the spring or summer the new brood crowds the hive. There's a new queen, too, and so the old swarm emigrates. It leaves the hive with the queen. The bees are up there in the air, and Mattock is trying to bring them down so they can be put in a new hive. If that wasn't done they'd probably fly off into the woods, and then they'd be lost. They'd go into

some hollow tree, or hole of some kind, and that would be the last that Mattock would see of them."

"Oh, that's the way of it!" said Skeen, when Jack had made this rather lengthy explanation.

Jube, wide-mouthed and grinning, climbed upon the fence, where he could see better.

The farmer and his family had no time to give to the boys in the lane.

"Oh, look at 'em up there!" said Jube, sitting on the fence and pointing. "There must be a million of 'em!"

He did not mind it when some of the water fell in a spray over him.

"But what is he throwing the water for?" Skeen asked.

"That wets the bees' wings," said Jack, "and makes it hard for them to fly; the noise seems to confuse them; and so they're soon ready to light on something. When they do, the farmer scrapes them into a big basket, or something, and puts them in the new hive."

"You better look out up there, Jube," Wilson warned. "Some of them fellers will jab a stinger into you!"

"I'll smash him if he does," Jube declared, hilariously.

He was immensely pleased with what he was beholding, and waved his arms.

Suddenly he noticed some bees beginning to collect on his coatsleeve, near the shoulder. One of them was larger than the others.

He lifted his hand to brush them off, wondering if he would be stung, when as many as a handful dabbed down upon that spot, clustering in a ball.

Jube was about to strike at them to brush them off, when old Mattock ran at him.

"Set still! set still!" he shouted.

Then he threw a whole dipperful of water on Jube, aiming it at the knot of bees that had dabbed down on Jube's coat.

Jube coughed, as the water splashed in his face, and seemed about to tumble back off the fence.

"By granny, I——"

More bees, handfuls of them it seemed, came tum-

bling down, settling on Jube's shoulder, and another dipperful of water splashed over his coat.

"By hemlock, I'm goin' tew——"

Jube threw one foot over, and was about to leap down into the lane.

"Set still, you fool," Mattock yelled at him, "they're lightin'!"

"I see they air, but I don't want 'em to light on me!"

Mattock rushed up, and, grabbing Jube by the leg, gave him a warning jerk.

"Set still, can't ye? They're lightin'!"

"Oh, they're lightin', all right," Jube acknowledged.

The air was thick with bees. They hummed round Jube's head like flies round a sugar barrel. And that bunch of them, clinging to his shoulder, increased in size in an amazing way. In less than a minute it was a ball bigger than his two hands, and steadily growing. The bees were simply piling up on each other in a buzzing, squirming mass.

With that heavy hand of Mattock on his leg, restraining him, and Mattock bellowing at him to sit still, Jube could not very well do anything else. But he stared, with something more than curiosity, at that mass of crawling bees. He was rather afraid of them. If all of those bees should sting him at once!

"They've swarmed, and now they're lightin'," Mattock explained.

Mattock's wife and children seemed to redouble their furious assaults on the tin pans and the cow bell. One of the boys passed up to the old man another dipper of water; and with his hand he began to shower it over the collecting mass of bees, throwing some of it also into the air, where the bees were humming like a loud top.

The boys in the lane were almost as astonished as Jubal.

They were in a better position to enjoy it than Jubal, however. Nothing but Jube's rather hard Yankee sense and a saving grace of humor kept him from falling bodily from the fence into the lane. He stuck to the fence now, flinching a bit, and ducking his head, as the bees thickened round it.

He saw the ball of bees on his shoulder growing

to prodigious proportions, and still they hummed in the air, apparently as many still on the wing as ever.

Some of them, moving and fussing around in their excitement, crawled up on Jube's neck, and others dropped on his hat and crawled down over his face.

"Say, I don't like this!" he cried, reaching up a hand. "I don't make it a rule to let anything walk on my nose."

"Don't do that!" shouted the farmer, as he saw that Jube was going to brush the bees off his face.

"Well, I don't want——"

"They'll sting you! If you'll jest let 'em alone they won't bother ye. Let 'em alone!"

Jube squirmed and writhed, while the farmer hung to his leg with one hand and showered the air with water with the other.

A bee climbed up on Jube's lip, and he tried to blow it away.

It resented it, and prodded its sting into his lip.

Then Jube howled.

"Say, let me go; I don't want any more of this! One of 'em stung me, already."

"Set still!" yelled Mattock, yanking him by the leg.

"But I ain't a beehive!" Jube protested.

"It's because you're so sweet!" Ned Skeen howled at him.

"I'll make yeou think I'm sweet, when I git daown from here," Jube howled back.

"They think you're a clover blossom," said Nat Kimball.

"Or sweet peas, or something," added Wilson Crane.

Jube felt his lip swelling, and tears of pain came into his eyes.

The ball of bees on his shoulder grew until the weight of it felt heavy; and still the farmer's family continued to drum the pans and jangle the old cow bell, and the farmer continued to shower water over everything, until Jube felt as wet as a drowned rat.

"Oh, gravy, when I git aout of this I'll——"

Another bee popped its stinger into him, and again he howled.

"'Tain't nothin'!" said the farmer. "'Twon't hurt long. Jest hold on a minute longer. They're stingin' me, too."

"But yeou're gittin' paid fer this, and I ain't; they're your bees, and you'll git to eat their honey, and I won't. Wow! There, another one popped me! Say, I got tew git daown; I can't stand it!"

"Jest another minute!" the farmer begged. "They're most all down now."

And he hung on to Jube's leg, thus holding him upon the fence, while the din, and the water throwing, and the whole performance, went on, with an added sting for Jube now and then.

But the thing was done at last.

The bees were a great writhing, buzzing ball on Jube's coat; and the farmer began to scoop them into a big basket with his bare hands, thrusting his hands right into the moving mass, though the motion was gentle and easy.

Jube watched him curiously, while the bicycle boys grouped near and made humorous comments.

"Say, I'll hammer some of yeou fellers, when I do git through with this!" Jube threatened.

Already Jube's lip was swelling so that it felt stiff when he talked; and the stings he had received smarted painfully. But the thing was so near done now that he resolved to be heroic and see it through.

"Jube, we never knew before that you were so sweet," Jack declared, laughing, as he saw Jube eying the bees that the farmer was scraping into the basket.

"If we tell this to the girls in town they'll chase him to death," said Nat Kimball.

"Oh, shet up!" Jube snapped; "I'll soon be chasin' yeou if yeou don't."

The bees were all in the basket at last, except a few that still clung to Jube's clothing; and then the work of removing them to the hive prepared for them was begun, as the sun dropped down, burning red along the tops of the western woods.

"I got to thank you for that," said Mattock, speaking to Jube. "Yeou see, as you set there on the fence, the queen dabbed down on your coat. That was the cause of it. Wherever the queen goes you can't keep the others from goin' unless you kill 'em. I was afraid you'd squash the queen, and that'd made trouble. But they're all right now."

Mattock was in high spirits. He had received stings,

and so had the members of his family, but these were not regarded; the bees had been caught, and were being hived, and that was the great thing.

"It's a good, strong stand, too," he said, jubilantly: "there are a lot of 'em."

"About a million, I guess," said Jube, sucking at his swollen lip.

"Hardly that, sonny, but there's a good many. And you did act mighty brave, too, for a town boy. Most town boys would 'a' run, I'm thinkin'. You was brave enough to stay right there."

"By granny, I had to!" Jube acknowledged. "Yeou wouldn't let me git off the fence. I'd have cut out a-kitin', if yeou hadn't grabbed my leg and held on. Gee! this sting hurts! He socked it tew me right in the lip, and I think he had a stinger on him as long as a needle. It's swellin' paowerful, tew!"

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE.

When the bees were safe and the boys were through joking Jube Marlin, Jack made the request which had brought them along the lane to the farmhouse, asking Mattock if he could furnish them supper and lodging for the night.

Mattock hesitated.

"I allow I ought to do something fer ye, for what one of you has done fer me, in gittin' them bees safe. And so I will; though, if't hadn't been fer that, I'd have said no. Ye see, my house is already full for the night. But if you chaps can sleep in the barn on the hay, why you're welcome to, and you needn't fear but the ole woman can furnish you all you can eat."

"Thank you," said Jack; "that will suit us just right. But when you say that, you don't know how Lafe Lampton can eat."

They were at the barn, where Mattock and his sons and daughters were beginning the evening milking.

"Don't go too near that cow, Jube," Ned Skeen warned.

"Why not?" said Jubal.

"You might scare her, and she'd fall down and strain her milk."

"By granny, yeou've joked me enough fer one day!"

said Jube, and he swung at him, but Ned dodged back and was safe.

After storing their bicycles in the carriage shed, the boys went up into the hayloft, where Mattock said they might bunk down for the night; and they found it a pleasant place, which they knew they should prefer to the stuffy rooms of the farmhouse. The thought of sleeping all night in the old barn just suited their ideas of a romantic time.

"Say, we'll sing to-night till we make the rafters ring," said Ned, with enthusiasm.

"Do you suppose," said Tom, "that Mr. Mattock meant anyone else besides the members of his family, when he spoke of his house being full to-night?"

"Perhaps some of those fox hunters!" Jack suggested. "We'll find out when we go in to supper."

"Just so that Ben Birkett isn't with them!" Tom grumbled. "I don't want to meet that fellow again. I shouldn't be able to keep my hands off of him."

But when they went in to supper they were given a surprise greater even than if Ben Birkett and the other fox hunters had been there.

Mattock rose to introduce his "company" of the evening; and, as he did so, three Indians rose from the table, and also a young and beautiful girl.

Jack Lightfoot knew them at once, for they were Mona Brighteyes and the three Indians, who, with some other men, had held Jubal Marlin, Wilson Crane, and others, prisoners in the old house in Tidewater, the week before, during the ball game between Tidewater and Cranford.*

"Boys, I dunno all o' your names, but these here people are a travelin' troupe that's goin' to give a show to-night in the Foster Schoolhouse, jist over the hill here a ways. They'd already made arrangements to stop with me overnight, which is the reason I told ye I didn't have any more room."

Jubal and Wilson flushed violently, as they acknowledged the introduction, and the three Indians looked somewhat disconcerted.

But Mona Brighteyes was equal to the occasion.

"We've met before, Mr. Mattock," she said—"at Tidewater. We were down there when they played

baseball with the Tidewater boys, and so got pretty well acquainted."

Then she smiled at Jack, and he saw from her smile and look that she did not desire to have the particulars of that meeting and acquaintanceship at Tidewater further explained.

Mona Brighteyes was a beautiful girl, and, though she had told Jack that she had a little Indian blood in her veins, no one could have guessed it. She had dark eyes and hair, and seemed but a handsome brunette, with a clear skin and almost perfect features.

Wilson and Jubal, as they sat down, after this introduction, stole covert glances at the three Indians, who had not said a word, and recalled how those red men had held them in that old house in Tidewater, with cords round their limbs, and at one time with gags in their mouths.

And Jack could but recall how he had seen those three Indians walk into the room where Wilson, Jubal, Ben Birkett and others were playing cards, take up the whisky bottle that was on the table and help themselves to its contents, without as much as saying to the boys "by your leave."

The Indians were now dressed in ordinary clothing, and had no paint on their faces; yet that they were full-blooded Indians Jack could see very clearly, and when they ventured to speak now and then they clipped their words in a strange fashion, a thing that Mona Brighteyes did not do.

Mona began a running fire of comment and conversation, as if for the purpose of making Jack and his friends forget all about what had happened at Tidewater; and Jack taking up the conversation with her, the meal progressed pleasantly enough after all, in spite of the shock of this strange meeting there at Mattock's.

"By hemlock, yeou never know what yeou're goin' to run up ag'in' in this world!" said Jubal, when the supper was ended and he and the other boys were out in the yard, with the exception of Jack, who had tarried within for further talk with the Indian girl. "Who'd have thought of meeting them Indians here? I never would!"

"It was as unexpected as the way those bees settled

*See last week's issue, No. 11, "Jack Lightfoot's Home Run; or, A Glorious Hit in the Right Place."

down on you," said Lafe. "But I tell you what—that butter and buttermilk was fine! I told you old Mattock always kept the goods."

Jack came out, saying that Mona Brighteyes had invited all of them to attend the entertainment to be given at the schoolhouse that night.

"We'll go, of course," he declared; "but we'll pay our way. I don't think they make any too much money with these schoolhouse exhibitions, and we can help them out a little."

The entire Mattock family went, as well as the bicycle boys, and when he saw the crowd that gathered, a crowd that packed the schoolhouse to its limit, Jack was not so sure as he had been that these schoolhouse exhibitions did not pay.

Jubal's eyes stuck out with astonishment.

"Say," he whispered to Jack, "this is a great scheme!"

"Great scheme! In what way?"

"Givin' exhibitions like this for money. We fellers could do it, and jist rake in the coin. We could give boxin', club swingin', jiu-jitsu, and a lot of other things that we could think up. Oh, say, we'll have tew work this idea!"

Seldom did anything ever turn up with money in it but Jubal straightaway began to plan how he could turn that stream of coin, or a portion of it, into his own pockets.

"Jube, you'll be a millionaire some day!" was Jack's answer.

"By granny, I intend tew!" was Jube's declaration. "But that's a bully idea naow, and don't yeou forget it! I allaow I'd like tew try it."

The Indians had exchanged their sober clothing for fanciful Indian dresses, with an abundance of paint and feathers and Indian beadwork. Mona Brighteyes had already told Jack that when white people came to see an Indian show they would not be satisfied unless the Indians dressed in that manner, and Jack knew that she was right. To the average mind an Indian without paint and feathers would not be an Indian at all.

And the exhibition was good, all the boys were ready to declare, consisting as it did of Indian war

dances, and a little play, in which Mona, representing a white girl, was captured by two of the cruel red men, and then was released by the third, after a hot fight in which the two wicked Indians were bowled all over the little stage.

Jack was suffering from a headache, which he believed was caused by that fall from his wheel, and he started back to the farmhouse alone, just before the show concluded.

He had almost forgotten about Ben Birkett and the fox hunters, in his interest in these new events, and was hurrying along the rather lonely path that led to Mattock's, when he saw a form move in the moonlight out beyond the fence.

He stopped and stared at it, and saw the figure—that of a man or boy—drop to the ground and slide out of sight.

Jack turned back toward the schoolhouse.

"That was Birkett, all right!" he said. "I'll tell the boys about it, for he's probably up to something."

And, though he had not obtained a good look at the fellow, he was convinced of the correctness of his guess.

It was his intention to tell the boys of what he had seen; but when he reached the schoolhouse the people were emerging, all in high spirits, many of them humming the Indian songs they had heard there.

Jack waited for the boys to come out, and found that they were hanging back, intending to go home with the Mattocks and the Indians.

And when all did go home, walking along the path and the lane together, Jack still said nothing, for the boys were in high spirits, and the Mattocks and the Indians were present to hear.

Many of the country people walked down that lane past Mattock's, forming a jolly company, that sang and bubbled over with laughter.

Mona Brighteyes had played a guitar in the show; and she unslung this from her shoulders as they walked along, and, twanging its strings, she and the Indians sang their strange, wailing songs until the very woods echoed.

The moon sailed on high, white as a silver boat; the

breeze of spring was softly blowing through the new leaves, and the fragrance of flowers haunted the air.

Even Jack felt like singing, in spite of what he had seen; and when the bicycle boys broke forth, after Mona and the Indians had ceased, Jack joined them, while they rolled out the Yale "Boola Song," and others like it.

CHAPTER VIII.

FALSELY ACCUSED.

In the barn that night, lying at ease on the soft hay, Jack recalled again the slinking form he had seen out by the path, and could but connect it with that shot from the hillside which had tumbled him into the road.

For some reason, not clear to himself, Jack felt that Ben Birkett's presence in the vicinity of Mattock's farmhouse boded ill to him or his friends.

He had told the boys what he had seen, and they had expressed their various opinions; yet the feeling that peril of some kind threatened troubled even his sleep, and made his slumber restless and filled with fear.

He seemed to have been asleep but a few minutes when the light of a lantern was flashed in his face.

Starting up with a cry of alarm, for this flash of light had aroused him from an unpleasant dream of Ben Birkett, Jack felt the rough hand of Eph Mattock clutching his shoulder.

"You'll come with me!" said Mattock, grimly. "I happened to be awake, and I seen ye through my winder, when the girl hollered, and seen you slide into this barn; and she's got yer hat down there as proof on't."

The other boys had started up, awakened by these words and by the light of the lantern.

Behind Mattock stood the three Indians, with Mattock's oldest son, a stout fellow of seventeen.

"You'll come with me!" said Mattock, and jerked Jack to a standing position.

"What have I done?" Jack demanded, that feeling of uneasiness which had troubled his sleep now oppressing him with greater force, while the other boys were rubbing their eyes open, or clambering out of their comfortable beds in the hay.

"Why, you took that money!" said Mattock.

"All the mon'!" said one of the Indians, pushing forward.

"The girl had it, you young skunk; and you went right into her room and took it."

Jack got up, flushing and trembling, with Mattock's heavy hand still on him.

"I don't know what you mean!" he cried. "I've been right here, asleep."

"A pertendin' sleep," said Mattock, jerking him along toward the rough stairway that led down from the hay. "No use to talk, young man, I seen ye, and the girl's got yer cap. She made a grab at you as you went through the winder, and your cap fell off right there on the floor, and then she yelled so that I looked out, and I seen ye scoot to the barn. I reckon we've got it down right fine on ye."

In spite of Jack's protests he was jerked along over the hay.

The other boys began a noisy demonstration, declaring that this was an outrage and that Jack had been asleep there all night.

"Why, my cap is here," said Jack; "it's here right now!"

"Where is it?" demanded Mattock.

Jack looked round; the cap was not where he had placed it.

"Stand up to him," said Lafe, belligerently; "this is a shame, and we won't have it. Don't go a step with him!"

"You're an old fool, Mattock!" said Ned Skeen.

"And you're a young puppy that ought to be paddled by his ma fer speakin' disrespectful to yer betters!" Mattock retorted.

He still pulled Jack along.

"Oh, I'll go with you!" said Jack. "But it isn't pleasant to be called a thief, when I haven't been near the house."

"What money was it?" demanded Skeen.

"The money that was took in at the show last night."

Last night! Jack realized suddenly that it was morning; and he saw a glow in the eastern sky, as he came out of the barn with Mattock.

"If there's been any stealing," said Tom, "it was done by Ben Birkett. He was seen sneaking round

near here, as we came home from the show. Jack saw him, out there by the path."

"Come in and see if this is Birkett's cap," said Mattock. "If this chap seen anyone out by the path that he thought was suspicious, why didn't he tell about it?"

"He did; he told us about it," said Kimball.

"And maybe that's another lie. But I know what I seen! And you'll come in and look at that cap!"

Within the house Jack found Mona Brighteyes. She was in tears. Mrs. Mattock was trying to soothe her, and Mrs. Mattock's two girls, aged ten and twelve, were seconding the efforts of the mother.

The telltale cap was on the table.

Jack's heart sank when he looked at it, for it was his own.

"Whose cap is it?" said Mattock.

"It's mine," Jack was obliged to confess.

"I didn't know but you'd say it wasn't; but I'd seen you wearin' it; and, though I may look like an old fool, I don't forgit things easy. You boys from town ain't never any good, nohow. When you ain't stealin' apples, you're stealin' somethin' else. This time it was money."

Jack knew that he flushed guiltily as he took up his cap. He could not help it.

"This isn't the first time that Birkett has got you into trouble," said Tom.

Then he told Mattock about the shot fired at Jack that afternoon.

"I guess you're makin' that up," said Mattock, skeptically. "If there'd been any shootin' I reckon you'd been talkin' about it, and I never heard a whimper out o' ye on the subject till right now. So that don't go down. I'm goin' to hold this young feller, and he'll be prosecuted and sent to jail, if there's any law in this county, unless he gives up that money and gives it up quick."

"But I haven't got it!" Jack insisted.

"Git it; you know where you put it!"

Jack looked at Mona Brighteyes; but she turned away her face.

"Do you think I am guilty of this?" he asked.

She had been kind to him at Tidewater, and he had parted with her there almost reluctantly.

"You surely can't think I stole that money?" he declared.

"But I saw you!" she said, now looking at him. "I was asleep, but when you tried to get out of the room I woke up and saw you. I jumped at you, and in trying to get through the window you dropped your cap. I had noticed the cap, and knew whose it was as soon as I put my hands on it."

Jack turned sick at heart.

He had tried to think that Mona Brighteyes would not accuse him, and he had been mistaken.

Moreover, he saw that no matter what he said now, these people—all of Mattock's family, the Indians, and the girl—would be sure he was guilty, and would stick to that opinion.

Nevertheless, he could do nothing else than protest against that belief and redeclare his innocence.

To make his sense of discomfort worse Mona began to cry.

"It was all the money we had," she said, sobbing. "It represented not only what we took in last night, but all our savings for more than a month."

Jack had dropped into a chair, where he twisted uneasily.

Behind him, and out in the other room, he heard some of his friends voicing their indignation.

Tom and some of the others had streamed out toward the barn. Mattock had declared that he saw the thief go to the barn; and Tom was hoping he might find Ben Birkett hiding there somewhere.

"But what hurts me almost as bad," said Mona, "is that you would do such a thing. I thought when you were at Tidewater that I never saw a more honest and upright boy."

Jack was hurt and indignant.

"Mona," he said, "I never took that money; I know nothing about it!"

"But when I saw you, how can I believe what you say now?"

"You didn't get a good look at me!"

"But your cap—there is your cap; and even you do not deny that it is yours!"

"Yes, it is my cap," Jack acknowledged. "I have

a theory as to how it happened to be found in your room, and——”

The dark eyes of the girl flashed.

She was convinced of Jack's guilt, and this seemed to her but an attempt to lie out of it. She rose, as if to leave the room.

Jack had taken up his cap, and he crumpled it nervously in his hands.

“I want you to hear me through, Miss Mona,” he said. “I have an enemy that you don't know anything about.”

But she did not stop to hear his explanation.

Jack rose from the chair he had occupied, his face very red.

Lafe was coming into the room. The old farmer, standing by the door, seemed to think that Jack might try to escape, and was watching him.

“Young feller,” he said, “I heard what you was sayin' to that girl. She didn't believe ye, ner I don't. I seen you, jist after you slipped out of the winder of her room and was scootin' toward the barn; she waked me up with her hollerin'. You didn't have yer cap on, but I seen you, and when I run into her room, and she showed me that cap, and told about bein' robbed, I knowed I was right, and that you done it. And when I went out to the barn where you was pertendin' to be asleep, yer cap was gone! What ye got to say to that?”

“That you are mistaken,” Jack declared, with what firmness he could. “I was not out of the barn all night, as these boys know. I left my cap hanging on that peg just at the top of the stairs, in the barn. The fellow who took it and who you thought was me was Ben Birkett, I'm sure. He is an enemy of mine, and he worked that plan to lay it onto me.”

“You're a good one, fer makin' up lies!” said Mattock. “But how could these friends o' yours know that you was in the barn all night, when they was asleep themselves? That's a weak p'int in your story. I know what I seen, and the cap was proof; and I'm goin' to take you to town and land you in jail. Mark that down.”

“You'll let me go out and make a search round the barn?” said Jack.

“Not if I know myself. You'll stay right here. My boy is goin' to git the carriage ready as soon as he gits breakfast, and we're goin' to take you to town.”

“What if we don't permit it?” said Lafe.

“I guess there'll be a lively old fight here, if you try to hender it,” Mattock threatened.

As he said it he stepped back and took a shotgun down from the wall.

“Now, see here!” he said; “that girl is my guest, stoppin' with me. She was robbed. It's my business, and my duty, to pectect her an' her property, and, by thunder, I'm goin' to do it, if I have to fight the whole of ye!”

Mattock's eyes blazed belligerently.

“You'll let me look at the room from which the money was taken?” said Jack.

Mattock hesitated, as if thinking this might be some subterfuge which Jack wanted to use for an attempt at escape.

“You may,” he said, finally, “by me goin' with ye, and keepin' my eyes on ye; but if you try any monkey tricks you'll suffer, now I tell ye.”

Tom came to the door, breathing heavily from a quick run.

“We can't find anyone out there,” he announced.

Mattock looked at him contemptuously.

“I guess you didn't hunt hard; but nobody expected that you would find anybody there, when there ain't anybody there to find. You fellers may think I'm easy, but you can't work me! I'm goin' to hold this chap, and the sooner he hands over that money he stole the easier it'll be for him.”

Jack saw it was useless to argue the matter further with Mattock.

Tom Lightfoot and Lafe were looking at Mattock as if they had serious thoughts of leaping on him and taking the gun from him.

They were justly and furiously resentful. In fact, all the boys were boiling over with anger and excitement. Some of them were out at the barn continuing the search.

A glance at Jack told Tom and Lafe that Jack did not want his friends to try force in this matter.

“I'm going to take a look at the room from which

the money was stolen," Jack explained. "Mr. Mattock said that I might do so. He's going with me."

"What's the use?" said Lafe. "Ben Birkett took the money, if anybody did."

"If anybody did?"

It was Mona Brighteyes who spoke. She had returned to the room, for what purpose was not apparent.

"That's what I said," Lafe declared, facing her sternly. "So far as I'm concerned, I don't know that any money was taken, but if there was Jack Lightfoot had nothing to do with it, and you ought to know that as well as I do. Does he look like a thief?"

"But the cap?" Mona persisted. "If he will give up the money nothing more will be said about it."

Then Lafe bubbled over.

"When we get through with this we'll make your Indians smoke! We'll prosecute 'em for what they did to Jube and Wilson down at Tidewater. That's been passed over; but I'll see, personally, that it isn't passed over any longer. We'll put those fellows through, all right!"

His voice and manner were threatening, and one of the Indians, hearing it, did not seem at all pleased.

"If you're goin' to look at that room, go ahead," said Mattock.

Then Jack went with him to the room, and Mona, accompanying them, showed the bed where she had slept, and the pillow from beneath which, she declared, the money had been taken. The window through which the thief had fled was still open, giving a view out toward the barn.

"I slep' in the room right over this," said Mattock to Jack, "and when she yelled I hopped out of bed and seen you scuddin'."

"And right there is where your cap fell off," said Mona, indicating the spot by the window.

"Then you didn't snatch it off?" Jack asked.

She looked at him reproachfully.

"It dropped off, while you were climbing through the window."

"That's all," said Jack. "Now, we'll go back."

CHAPTER IX.

A QUICK CHANGE OF CONDITIONS.

Jack Lightfoot realized keenly the unpleasant position in which he was placed.

Mattock was resolved to take him to town, and there charge him with having entered the room of Mona Brighteyes in the night and stolen that money from under her pillow.

That Jack could not be guilty of such a thing did not lessen the difficulty; it but increased the unpleasantness of the situation.

Jack knew he had enemies in Cranford who would rejoice at his downfall.

Chief of them, perhaps, was Prof. Sanderson, of the academy.

Sanderson had always been Jack's enemy, and Jack knew how delighted he would be if Jack was brought into Cranford a prisoner charged with so offensive a crime. And Sanderson would not be alone. Certain others would be quite as jubilant; even Phil Kirtland, though apparently now Jack's friend, would not probably shed any tears over it.

Jack was but too well aware of all this, and he foresaw the humiliation to which he would be subjected, if Mattock carried out his determination.

Another boy, thus situated, might have attempted flight, or a fight. Jack's bicycle friends would have come to his assistance without a thought of themselves if he had but summoned them.

But Jack was sensible enough to see that even if he escaped in any such way, that would be only postponing the disagreeable matter; and such a flight would seem a confession of guilt.

Mattock would go to Cranford, spread the story there, and swear out a warrant for his arrest, and when Jack and the bicycle boys came back to town Jack would be arrested on Mattock's charge.

Even the fact that the constable was Kennedy, who was friendly to him, could not prevent that. Kennedy would be forced to make the arrest, if Mattock took out the proper papers.

Apparently the only way out of the difficulty was for Jack to prove to Mattock his innocence, and that seemed impossible.

When Jack returned with Mattock and the others to the larger room of the house Mona Brighteyes accompanied them.

Jack scarcely looked at her. His throat seemed to choke, whenever he did. He could have cried, if that would have done any good, and he did feel almost like crying. A sense of indignation alone sustained him and enabled him to keep from breaking down.

It seemed to him that so sensible a girl as Mona Brighteyes ought to know he could not have taken that money.

"I suppose you still think I did that?" he asked, to test this, as they came back into the larger room together.

"I don't want to think it," she admitted.

"I have given you my word of honor!"

The trouble was that Mona did not know whether his word of honor was worth anything. Jack was to all intents a stranger to her. Before meeting him at Tidewater the previous week she had never even heard of him.

Mona turned her face away. She was too distressed for words. She had tried to believe in Jack, and she had liked him. But the loss of that money was a terrible blow to her. It took her living. Many weeks of hard work would be needed to put back in her purse that much money. In the meantime, she and the Indians with her, one of whom was related to her, would be little better than beggars, without a cent until they could earn something.

She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and Jack observed that she was crying again.

Seeing that Jack showed no intention of trying to get away, Mattock hung up his shotgun; but he remained in the room, ready to jump for it, or jump for the door, if Jack made a movement.

Out in the kitchen Mrs. Mattock and her two young girls were busy in preparing a hasty breakfast; and out at the barn Mattock's boys were putting things in order to convey Jack as a prisoner to Cranford.

Lafe was still in the room with Jack; Skeen was just outside, near the door; while Tom had started again for the barn, where some of the boys were continuing the fruitless search.

Jack was about to speak to Mona again, when he heard a sudden outcry:

Then he distinctly heard the words:

"There he goes!"

Lafe jumped for the door, as Ned Skeen took up the cry:

"There he goes! It's Ben Birkett!"

Jack sprang from his chair.

"Stop, there!" yelled Mattock, who thought this was a planned diversion to give Jack a chance to get away.

As Jack leaped toward the door the farmer ran to get his shotgun.

A couple of bounds took Jack into the yard, and then he observed Birkett, mounted on his horse, appearing from the woods beyond the roadway.

At a glance Jack saw that instead of hiding in the barn when he was seen to run to it, Birkett had gone round the barn, and then had hurried into the woods, where his horse was.

The outcry made immediately when Birkett fled, and the search round the barn which the boys began, had made Birkett afraid to emerge from the woods, which he could hardly do without being seen.

Timidity had kept him in hiding, while the light of the new day was poor, and when he might have escaped with the best chances of success; and it was timidity, rather than courage, which was now driving him out of the woods. The rising sun, throwing its light through the trees, made him feel that his place of concealment was poor, and he had resolved on a bold dash.

His horse was thundering down the steep bank that led to the road, as Jack came through the doorway.

There could be no doubt that the horseman was Birkett, for the new sunshine revealed him fully.

Jack ran now like a greyhound toward the barn, even while Mattock was bellowing to him to stop; and Lafe and Skeen did the same.

Tom had been in the barn, and had run out; but it was Nat Kimball, outside of the barn, who had discovered Birkett trying to get out of the woods without being seen, and it was Nat who had first raised the alarm.

"After him!" Jack shouted.

Mona Brighteyes had hurried out into the yard, and the Indians had also appeared. Behind Mona, fairly tumbling along in his haste, came the farmer, with his shotgun.

"Halt, there!" he screamed. "If you don't, I'll shoot your gol-darned head off!"

But Jack did not halt.

His bicycle was in the carriage shed, where all the bicycles had been housed for the night.

With Tom he ran into the shed.

Ben Birkett was clattering down the road, and was already some distance away, for he had a good start, being mounted and prepared.

Jack sprang out of the shed, and with one bound was on his wheel; while Tom was as quick. Skeen dashed into the shed and threw his own wheel out. The other boys were now at the shed door, Lafe Lampton among them.

As Jack turned on his wheel and sent it spinning into the lane and toward the road, the irate farmer threw the shotgun to his shoulder.

"You infernal young skunk!" he yelled. "Cut out that way, will ye? I'll fill yer hide full o' holes."

He pulled trigger, and the roar of the shotgun sounded.

But the charge of shot went into the ground, plowing up a hole in the yard, for Mona Brighteyes had struck down the muzzle of the weapon just as Mattock fired it.

Mattock turned on her.

"He's gittin' away!" he shouted, his face red with rage and confusion. "Can't ye see he's gittin' away!"

"But we don't want murder done," she said, trembling, though she spoke coolly.

Jack was at the end of the lane, and turning into the road, and Tom Lightfoot was right at his side, with Skeen and Lafe and the others right behind them, all pedaling as fast as they could.

Mattock tried to lift his gun again, for the purpose of trying the second barrel; but Mona Brighteyes gripped the weapon and kept him from doing it.

"No!" she said, sternly. "We don't want murder done!"

"But he's gittin' away!"

"You saw the young fellow on the horse?" she said. "That was just a trick. Some friend of theirs; and now they're goin'."

He sank down on the doorstep, trembling. Suddenly he had realized that this young Indian girl had saved him from the probable commission of a crime.

"You're right," he admitted; "it don't cure one wrong to commit another. I can git that thief by goin' to the town and swearin' out a warrant fer him. If I'd killed him, or even sprinkled him with shot, I'd been put in jail myself."

He wiped the sweat from his brow with his hand.

His wife and daughters had run to the door, and his boys were hurrying up from the stables.

"I reckon you was right about that," he acknowledged, still speaking to Mona.

Then he stood up and looked down the road, where the bicyclists were vanishing.

Far beyond them he heard the clatter of hoofs, where Ben Birkett was riding as if for his life, with the bicyclists bowling along in pursuit.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED OBSTACLE.

"Let 'em catch me, if they can!" was the thought of Ben Birkett, as he spurred along the road.

Yet Ben Birkett began to lose confidence, when the bicycle boys hit the road and stretched out in earnest chase of him.

Jack Lightfoot led the pursuers, and sent his wheel round with dizzying speed, bending over the handle bars and putting all the strength of his strong, young legs into the work.

A yard or two behind him came Tom Lightfoot, as determined as Jack himself, his gray-blue eyes shining.

Ned Skeen followed, pumping for all he was worth; and behind Skeen came Nat Kimball, Lafe Lampton and the others.

It was a stern chase, and that is proverbially a long one.

Ben Birkett urged his flying horse on with voice and spur, lashing him also with the reins, and shouting at

him; and the horse responded with a fine burst of speed.

The farmhouse was soon left behind, and even the figures of the farmer and his family, and of Mona and the Indians, all now out in the road, became lost to view, in the dust that was whirled up in the road by the passage of those whizzing wheels.

Fast as Birkett was riding, the bicycle boys were going at as rapid a pace.

It was a test of endurance between horseflesh and the speeding wheels.

Jack believed that he was gaining, though he could not always be sure of this, for, when Birkett lost ground in ascending some hill, the bicycle boys also lost ground when they came to the same ascent.

The road wound and twisted like a snake through the woods, so that Birkett was often out of sight for some considerable time. At other times the road lay straight between cultivated fields, and Birkett was in plain view.

The road Birkett had taken was not familiar to Jack, and he did not know whether it led in the direction of Lansing or not; but Lansing was far away, too far for it to offer refuge to the fugitive.

A long hill, up which the horse traveled with manifest difficulty, gave the boys such an advantage—for they were on smooth ground while Birkett was climbing the hill—that it seemed they must soon catch him.

But the hill retarded the bicyclists, and Ben Birkett rode on over the crest, and with a cry of triumph galloped out of sight.

The boys came closer together, as the ascent of this hill was made. They pumped manfully to the top of it.

Just below, and not so far away, but near a bend in the road, they again saw Ben Birkett. The descent of the hill had been almost as difficult for the horse as the ascent. Birkett could not drive it down the hill at high speed, because that risked a stumble and a fall. So he had been delayed, both in making the ascent and the descent.

"Fellows, we've got him!" Jack shouted, and he sped, coasting down the hill, with the other boys com-

ing close behind him, and all much encouraged by that near view of Ben Birkett.

Jack heard a clatter just round the bend, out of sight, as he neared the lower end of the hill. He believed he was right upon Birkett, and he swung his hat with a cheer of encouragement to the boys who were following him.

Just then, while they were rushing down the road with the speed of the Limited Mail, Jack saw something ahead that chilled his blood.

A pack of youngsters had appeared round the bend in a heavy farm wagon, apparently out for a picnic.

The situation was thrilling and perilous, for the road was so narrow that it did not seem possible for the bicycle boys to shoot safely by.

The frightened children in the farm wagon sprang to their feet with cries of alarm, and the horses, scared by those flying forms and spinning wheels that dropped so swiftly down the hill toward them, became unmanageable.

It had been the rattle of this wagon and the pounding of the hoofs of these horses which Jack had mistaken for the clatter of the hoofs of Birkett's horse, making him think Birkett was so near.

The driver of the farm horses drew in on the reins, dragging at the bits, as the horses reared and pawed the air.

Then the horses whirled as if on a pivot. Something gave way with a crash. The turning wagon flew round, cramping and rising high on two side wheels.

Then the lines gave way, under the surging of the scared horses, and a crushed wagon went flopping down the road.

The frightened horses had turned in that narrow space, breaking the wagon, and were now running away.

One hind wheel had been smashed, and now bumped and jumped along the ground, jolting the body of the wagon up and down.

The driver tried to climb out over the front of the wagon and get hold of the broken lines, but in this effort he slipped and tumbled headlong to the ground.

Two or three of the children were thrown out, one being sent flying into some bushes by the roadside.

The horses with the broken wagon left the main road and took along a narrow lane, the broken wheel rising and falling, causing the wagon to jolt and bounce until it seemed remarkable that any of the scared children could cling to it.

Yet they hung on for dear life, clinging to the sides of the bouncing wagon.

Then another rolled out, falling to the ground, as the wagon made the turn into the narrower road.

Far ahead now was Ben Birkett, and increasing his distance. Jack had not much time for thought, but he saw where the road had widened beyond the bend, giving room for Birkett to pass easily. It was Birkett's rush past the farm horses that had first startled them, the bicycles following completing the work of fear.

Jack was anxious to overtake Ben Birkett, but the danger of those children appealed to him. He saw that the road into which the horses had turned was gullied, and filled here and there with stumps. On the sides grew willows which had been chopped down, so that their stumps stood up like sharp, short spears, waiting to impale any unlucky child that might be thrown out on them.

With but a glance at Ben Birkett speeding away, Jack turned his bicycle into the narrower road and sped on after the runaway horses.

He had ridden hard after Ben Birkett, but he rode even harder now. In his pursuit of Birkett he had tempered his speed so that his friends could keep up with him. Now he cast this desire aside and sent his wheel on as only he could.

As he did so, he yelled encouragement to the children.

Tom turned into the lane after him, and the others, after a regretful glance cast in the direction of Birkett, did the same.

Nat Kimball and Lafe were the very last, and they had delayed to make sure that the children thrown out did not need their aid.

Exerting himself to the utmost, Jack Lightfoot began to gain on the frightened horses, which were hampered by dragging behind them the broken wagon.

Yard by yard he decreased the separating distance, until he was up to the wagon; and then, slowly he forged along until he was riding by the side of the nearest horse.

The children were mute through fear. The horses, wild-eyed, with red nostrils distended, were thundering along the road, and the crash of the bouncing wagon made a horrible sound, suggestive of broken bones and death.

As he approached the shoulders and neck of the horse, Jack turned his wheel just a trifle toward the outside of the road; and then, with the leap of an athlete, he sprang erect on the seat of the whizzing wheel, and with a bound threw himself to the horse's back.

He hung for a moment, as the bicycle ran off into the bushes at the roadside and crashed over on its side, then, with a flounce, he climbed higher, and succeeded in getting on the horse's back.

As soon as he did that he put his hands forward between the heads of the horses and secured a firm hold of the bridle reins.

But the fight was by no means won, for the horses were wild with fear, and not to be conquered easily.

Jack jerked savagely upon the bits, and called to the horses in commanding tones. For the first time he heard one of the children crying. That sight of his bravery had evoked its wails.

Jack jerked again and yet again, throwing his whole strength into the work, and by degrees the terrific speed of the running animals slackened.

But half a mile or more had been passed over after Jack secured a seat on the back of the horse before he got them under control and was able to stop them.

As he brought them to a panting and foaming halt at last, he heard the bicycle boys behind him, and the horses began to leap again.

"Off your wheels!" he shouted.

Tom, in the lead, left his wheel, and ran round in front of the horses, to give his assistance there.

The terrified children were crying and tumbling to the ground for safety, now that the danger was practically over.

Fortunately none of them had been seriously hurt,

nor were those who had tumbled out other than being badly scared and somewhat bruised.

Back in the road, running as fast as he could, came the driver, still clinging to his whip.

Before he arrived, Jack and the boys had the horses pacified; but their mouths dripped bloody foam, for those savage bits had cut cruelly.

The driver was so glad to discover that the children were safe that he forgot either to thank or to blame the boys for what they had done, and Jack was too anxious to return to the main road and continue the pursuit of Ben Birkett to stop to ask many questions or give many explanations.

He had performed his duty as he had seen it, and that was enough.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHASE RENEWED.

"We'll never overtake him now!" said Lafe Lamp-ton.

But Jack only asked them if they were good for another run.

"Howling mackerels," Skeerl cried, "I'm too much excited to be tired!"

He looked it. His breast was heaving and his eyes gleaming.

All the boys were flushed of face, and the run had already told on their strength.

"I'm going to catch Birkett, if I have to make it a century run," was Jack's declaration. "Whenever any of you feel that the clip is too fast or heavy for you just drop out. I've got to go on."

The boys declared that they could stay by the chase as long as he could.

They returned now to the main road as quickly as they could.

Again the pursuit was on.

Ben Birkett was out of sight, but far down the road a dust cloud, kicked up by the hoofs of his horse, showed his position.

Jack pointed to it encouragingly.

"He's right ahead there! Fellows, we'll get him yet!"

"If we don't run into any more wagons," said Kimball.

"I'm thankful that none of those kids were killed," said Tom.

"If I had a bite of something to eat I could get down to this work a little better," Lafe declared.

"By hemlock, you're always wantin' somethin' to eat!" scoffed Jubal.

Then they sped on, stopping their talk as they got down to serious business, with Jack Lightfoot again pacemaker, and setting them a clip that they found it not easy to follow.

Jack again bent over his handle bars and sent his wheel on. He was not talking, but now and again he looked down the long ribbon of road that here lay straight before him. Birkett was out of sight, but he saw that dust cloud, and his determination to run down the young rascal was as firm as when the chase began.

A mile, two miles, three miles was gone over, at that hot speed.

Birkett was still well ahead, riding like the wind.

Another mile, and another, was run off.

Jack saw that he was gaining. The dust cloud was much nearer.

There was a rise now in the road, and when its top was reached Jack saw Birkett again, less than a mile ahead.

Birkett turned and looked back, wheeling round in his saddle.

He saw Jack top the hill, and he began once more to ply the spurs.

Other hills were before him. His horse was becoming blown, but he reasoned that the bicycle boys must also be growing tired.

They were well strung out, and Nat Kimball and Lafe were some distance behind, but coming on manfully. Nat was smaller and not so strong as the other boys, and Lafe was a little heavy to be a first-class bicycle rider for speed.

The lay of the land now gave the advantage to the bicycle boys, for, though the hills were difficult to climb, making progress painfully slow, when the tops were gained the boys could coast down like speeding toboggans.

The horse had trouble in climbing the ascents, and almost as much difficulty in making the run down; for, if it went too rapidly downhill, it stumbled.

There was no stumbling on the part of the bicycles. The riders had merely to watch out closely for obstructions and let the wheels fly.

The bicycle boys were now gaining rapidly. Birkett saw this and lashed his straining animal on. But the long run was telling on its strength.

On the other hand the knowledge, or belief, that the race was nearing its end, and that they were rapidly overhauling Ben Birkett, acted as a spur to the boys, put new life into them, and made them forget that they were well spent.

When the top of the last of the hills that lay here was reached Jack was so close upon Birkett that the latter was less than two hundred yards ahead. The horse was running heavily, and was sweating so much that the foam could be seen on its legs.

Jack yelled, when he saw Birkett so near, and, instead of merely coasting, he set his feet to spinning, to increase the swiftness of his descent, flashing down the hill like a falling meteor.

The other boys, seeing Birkett also as they topped the rise, imitated Jack's example, and came sailing down behind him, their feet whirring round.

At the steepest place they took their feet off the pedals, for the wheels were simply spinning.

At the bottom of the hill Ben Birkett was not twenty yards in the lead, and the distance was decreasing.

Jack drove his wheel right ahead.

Birkett turned again in his saddle, and such a look of hate, of fear, of rage and humiliation, as shone in his face Jack had never seen. In that look was concentrated all the terror and malignity of Ben Birkett's nature.

When Jack saw this it made him glad that Birkett did not have the little rifle with him, for it was clear that he would have used it on his pursuers.

Jack still gained, and then, with Birkett's horse stumbling and limping, for it had been sadly over-driven, Jack sped past Birkett, while the other boys swung up until all of them were either at Birkett's side or just behind him. It was like the closing in of hounds on a fox.

Birkett saw that he was corralled. Sending his horse at the nearest fence, he flung himself out of the saddle when the fence was gained, and tried to clamber over into the woods.

But Jack leaped from his bicycle while it was still

going at good speed, and, rushing at Birkett, caught him as he was straddling the fence.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Birkett struck at him, and began to struggle to get away.

Jack hung on as the bulldog does when it sets its teeth in a foe, and the other boys hurrying quickly to his aid, Birkett was made a prisoner.

His face was flushed and showed fear; those of his captors were also flushed, but they were marked with exultation.

The time of reaction from that terrific chase had not yet arrived, and excitement made them forget their half-exhausted condition.

"You will come with us, Birkett!" said Jack.

"I don't have to!"

"Then we'll get a wagon from some farmer, tie you, and take you that way," said Jack.

"What is this for? You fellows always had a grudge against me!"

"That ain't so," said Wilson Crane; "I always stood up for you at the academy, until I knew what kind of critter you were."

"And I thought well of you," said Skeen, "until after that trick you played on Jack; then I was done with you."

"But what are you holding me for?"

"Why did you run?"

"I ran because you chased me; I knew that you fellows had it in for me, and——"

"You will fork over that money you stole there at Mattock's," said Jack.

"I never stole any."

"Go through him, Tom."

Tom Lightfoot went through Birkett, doing the work so well that from an inner pocket he brought out a large purse which contained a roll of bills and some silver, with a lot of small change.

"Here it is!" he said.

"That's what we followed you for," said Jack; "and, also, because I was accused of stealing that money. Now, you'll go with us back to that house, and you'll tell those people that you took the money, and thus free me from that charge."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," said Birkett.

Jack glanced around.

He saw some small saplings, not larger in diameter than his little finger.

"Those will make withes," he said. "We'll put him on his horse, tie his feet under the horse's belly with withes, and fasten his hands, and take him back."

Birkett broke down now.

"If I go along quietly will you keep those things off of me?" he asked.

Jack saw the thought behind the request. Birkett was hoping that if he was put on the horse and not tied some chance might yet come by which he could escape.

"No; we'll tie you!" said Jack.

Under his directions, the boys cut down the slender, green saplings, and twisted them until they were as pliable as ropes. With the withes thus made, they secured Birkett to the back of the horse, and also tied his hands together at the wrists.

And with their prisoner thus safe in their midst, they set out for Mattock's.

The return to Mattock's was made at a slow pace. The horse was lame and tired, and the boys found themselves pretty well worn out.

Hence it took time, for the route that they had come over so swiftly was a long one.

On the way they passed the narrow road where the wagon had been encountered and the picnic children narrowly escaped death.

But the wagon and the children were gone.

Broken spokes and remnants of a splintered wheel, with other signs, told, however, what had taken place there.

Then, after another long journey, Mattock's farmhouse was brought in sight.

When they reached Mattock's, Birkett was sullen.

"If I tell the truth will you let me go?" he asked, as the boys conducted him into the yard, while Mattock and the others there, including Mona and the Indians, came out of the house. "I'll tell," said Birkett, "if you fellows will be easy on me."

"It will be better for you to tell, anyway," said Jack.

Whereupon Birkett made confession, admitting that he had taken the money, and admitting also that he had stolen into the barn and secured Jack's cap for the purpose of throwing the blame on him. He also said that he had dropped the cap off purposely when he scrambled through the window, and that he would have dropped it there for the same purpose, even if Mona had not detected him as he made his escape.

"Once before, at Cranford, you tried to lay a crime on me, and make people think it was me, by wearing my coat," Jack reminded him.

"And that's just the thing that made me think of this trick," said Birkett, defiantly. "Now do your worst! I haven't a home any longer, I was desperate

when I stole that money, and I don't care what becomes of me. Do your worst."

Even Jack was sorry for him.

* * * * *

Jack and the bicycle boys wheeled on home to Cranford that day, their cyclometers showing that, though they had not followed the route they intended, they had made their century run, all right.

Mattock and his son, with the three Indians, agreed to take Birkett to town and deliver him up.

When the big farm wagon appeared in Cranford, getting in late, the farmer and his son were alone in it.

Mattock fished out a note, which he handed to Jack. It was from Birkett.

"I think it was the Indians let him git away," said Mattock. "We was some distance from here, and they was watchin' Birkett, while I and my son drove the horses. Then we heard a yell, and seen Birkett lightin' out for the woods. The Indians follered him, or pretended to; but we didn't see any of 'em ag'in. I think they let him git away."

"They did it purposely," said Jack. "They were probably afraid if they came to town themselves they would be arrested for what they did at Tidewater last week. But let him go."

To tell the truth, Jack Lightfoot could not be very sorry that Birkett had escaped. It seemed a terrible thing to send one who was so young to prison.

Jack now read the note, which was in Birkett's handwriting, in pencil, and which had been found by Mattock in the bottom of the wagon, after Birkett fled. It seemed to prove that the Indians had aided Birkett to get away; for, otherwise, how could he have secured pencil and paper and opportunity to write?

And this is what the note contained:

"JACK LIGHTFOOT: You will find me a dangerous enemy. You tried hard enough to send me to the pen, and have made me a desperate fugitive. Look out for yourself. If I ever get you in a corner I'll show you no mercy.

BEN BIRKETT."

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 13, will be "Jack Lightfoot's Lucky Puncture; or, A Young Athlete Among the Hoboes." This is another lively story, filled with incident, fun, adventure, and bicycling. There are some tramps who play a prominent part and succeed in making things decidedly lively for Jack. You will want to read this story.

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. Besides answering the various letters and giving advice on athletics, it is our intention to furnish from time to time short essays upon timely topics, such as "How to pitch a drop ball," and other things that most boys desire to know, told in a manner that may be easily understood. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

I am especially interested in the baseball stories which you are publishing, and I can see that we shall have considerable in this line before the season is over. Now, I like your way of describing a game. It stands right out before a fellow, just as if he was a rooter, on the spot. And when the game gets warm, I confess that I feel my blood begin to dance, and I sometimes think I'd like to throw up my hat and give one good shout for that blessed Old Wagon Tongue on which the boys of the high school nine seem to depend. Why, I'm even worried at times with a fear that it may crack, the way even the best of bats do, when too dry. If it does, I guess that game can be put down in the lost column, for, apparently, Jack and his fellows couldn't win out without Old Wagon Tongue.

But I started to write this letter to ask you a few questions, as I am in need of information. I have been developing great speed in pitching, and, being possessed of a few nice curves and drops, I flatter myself that I may be a comer. Every fellow has to make a start, they say, and I have a few cards up my sleeve that ought to stand me well.

I am deeply interested in that newfangled drop of Jack Chesbro, which has been called the "spit" ball. It seems to be the most puzzling ever, and when a fellow has control, no batter is able to connect. Mr. Stevens mentions it, and Lightfoot is made to do a few clever stunts with the same, but no explanation as to how the trick is played is given.

Now, Mr. Editor, please favor me with some sort of

a description as to just how the thing is done. I feel that it is in my line, and that if a knack of handling the ball as I please will help me out, I can, after decent practice, deliver the goods. And I am sure that others among your readers, who, like myself, are baseball enthusiasts, would be glad to know about the working of this astonishing trick ball. Wishing you all success with your interesting series, and hoping that you will see fit to favor me with an answer, I remain, yours truly,

Danville, Ill.

FRANK C. POWELL.

We are making preparations to give a weekly essay upon just such subjects as our correspondent mentions. In a condensed manner we shall explain many of the things so interesting to young baseball players—"how to bat," "how to run bases," "how to pitch an in-curve," and the various other things so vitally connected with the art of playing baseball. They will be exceedingly interesting, and instructive as well, being written by a past master in the art. And Frank may be certain that one of the first subjects dealt with will be the mysterious "spit" ball so much talked about. Chesbro, the famous New York American pitcher, does not claim to have originated this puzzling down-shoot; but he was the first great pitcher to successfully master its secret. In good time you will learn just how it is done.

I want to say that I like your athletic stories first rate, and I wish I belonged to a club of young fellows, with just such a bully, good training quarters as their old gym. over the wagon shop. I have a bit of a place of my own fitted up with a few things, like a punching bag, parallel bars, weights and Indian clubs, where I put in considerable of my time when out of school. Could you tell me if my figure is anything like a natural one? I am just 5 feet 8 inches in height, weigh 151 pounds, with a chest measurement of 38 inches, and around the calf 14½ inches. Please let me know. I imagine I am a little too heavy, and ought to do something to cut down my weight.

Concord, N. H.

GEORGE PAISLEY BROWN,

One of the ALL-SPORTS Boys.

It is always a pleasure to hear from any of "our boys," especially when it concerns their desire to make themselves robust, athletic young men. Continue your good work with what apparatus you possess. A cross-country run, or a long, daily walk would assist in reducing your weight. As it is, you are about ten pounds too heavy for your size. Your measurements are very good, indeed; a little above the average. If you can knock off that extra ten pounds, doubtless you will be in prime condition.

DEAR SIR: I think the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY is about the best out. I have read every number so far, and the time can't pass quick enough for me during the week. In six months' time it will be ahead of all publications of a similar kind. The stories are founded on good moral character, and are of the kind that nobody need fear to read. So I will end this letter with three cheers and a tiger for the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY.

Yours respectfully,

JOHN S. SLETOO.

Easton, Pa.

Of course we appreciate this kindly sentiment on the part of our young friend, and we hope his interest will continue to grow as Jack Lightfoot and his comrades appear before the public from week to week. He may be sure that neither the author nor the publisher of ALL-SPORTS will leave anything undone that might add to the fame of the Cranford boys, and make them more popular with Young America. You can depend upon it there are many splendid things in store for those who are readers of ALL-SPORTS.

I am one of your admirers. I think the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY a good thing, and want to push it along. Just by accident I picked up a copy, and became immediately so interested, that I had the newsdealer send for all the back numbers. Then I started in to learn all about this Jack Lightfoot and his friends. Now I keep a file, and it is often very handy when I want to refer to anything that happened. I can't just explain how it is, but the author has made us seem to know the Cranford boys personally. I declare I'm sometimes wondering if Jack isn't one of my friends, I seem to be so well acquainted with his faults and his many good points. But Lafe Lampton, I think, is the universal favorite, because he seems to be such a good fellow to have as a chum. I give you my word, that I look forward each week to the day when ALL-SPORTS comes out, and once I have the copy, it would take a big pull to get me out of my snug little "den" that evening. I wish you could see fit to open a department in the back of the library, where the readers might come together for a weekly talk. There are some questions I would like to ask about the best methods for strengthening the muscles, enlarging the chest, etc. Hoping that you will not feel bored with this letter, which I could not help writing, because I wanted you to know just how much pleasure you had given me, I will say good-by.

Plainfield, N. J.

J. W. SANFORD.

Our correspondent has learned ere now that we have been considering the very move he suggests, and that it has been decided to carry such a department in the future. So if J. W. will forward the questions he had in mind, we shall endeavor to answer the same. The general tone of such letters gives us considerable satisfaction, and we firmly intend that the human interest that is so marked a characteristic in these stories shall not grow less. They may lack in sensational qualities, but we believe this will be more than made up for in the long run. It is the steady aim of Mr. Stevens to make Jack

and his comrades living, moving characters, whom the boys learn to look upon in the light of friends, rather than mere puppets or stage figures, jumping whenever a string is pulled.

I am a reader of ALL-SPORTS. I thought I would write you to find out what a punching bag, and those sort of things that belong to a gymnasium, would cost. Some of the fellows here want to start up, and we are wondering how much money it will take. Please answer this and greatly oblige.

E. T. L.

Lexington, Ky.

We could not quote prices, since they vary, according to the quality desired. The best way for you and your friends to do would be to send for a catalogue of athletic goods, from which you might make your own selection. Any responsible house, like that of Spalding Bros., in New York or Chicago, would send you a catalogue on application. If you do make a start, let us hear, from time to time, how you get along, as we naturally take an interest in such commendable enterprises.

I am a young fellow of eighteen, and have been something of an athlete in the past, which was the main reason your publication appealed to me. For a year or so I have been out of training, and feel as though it would be a good thing to start in again, as I have been taking on flesh, and somehow my health does not seem so good. I weigh just 158 pounds and am 5 feet 8 inches in height. What do you think—is that too heavy? I enjoy the stories in ALL-SPORTS more than I can tell you. Hoping to have this letter answered, I remain,

WALLACE B. TUCKER, JR.

Hackensack, N. J.

You are about twelve to fourteen pounds too heavy for an athlete of your height. Better go back to your exercises and work it off—you will certainly feel in finer fettle.

I want to say that I think the stand Mr. Stevens takes against that tricky Japanese method of wrestling, called jiu-jitsu, is sound American sense. That sort of thing seems to go with the wily Eastern character, but English-speaking races ought to be ashamed to take to it. We believe in being manly at all times. The fellow who can break an arm or another fellow's back, at his pleasure, is a dangerous proposition. I know it would be all right, if only the proper men learned the trick, to be used solely in self-defense; but what is to hinder every ruffian picking up the secret, and making himself more dangerous than ever? No doubt some will disagree with me, just as Nat Kimball looked at things in a different light from Jack Lightfoot. If you could spare the space for a controversy in the back of the library, we might argue the matter and thresh it out.

RODERIC DHU.

Quite a good idea. Suppose some of our boys take this challenge up. What is your opinion of the Japanese method of putting an antagonist out of the game—is it a fair thing?

THE EDITOR.

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